महाभारत

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

BOOK 2

THE COMPLETE SABHA PARVA

Transcreated from Sanskrit

by P. Lal

THE MAHĀBHĀRATA OF VYĀSA

The Complete Sabhā Parva
Transcreated śloka-by-śloka from Sanskrit by P. Lāl

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Two birds sit
on the golden bough
of the pippala tree.
One eats
the sweet fruit.
The other watches.
Both are happy.
One is happier.
Which?

Śvetāśvatara
Upaniṣad IV : 6

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महाभारत

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The Mahābhārata of Vyasa

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BOOK TWO

The Complete Sabhā Parva

The Transcreator

P. Lāl is honorary Professor of English in St. Xavier's College, Calcutta. He was Special Professor of Indian Studies at Hofstra University, New York, 1962-63, and has lectured widely on Indian literature at English, American, and Australian universities. He was a delegate from India to the P. E. N. International Writers Conference in New York in June 1966, and Visiting Professor in the University of Illinois for the spring semester of 1968. Transcreated the Br.hadaran.yaka and Mahānārānayaṇa Upaniṣads on a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship award in 1969-70. Visiting Professor of Comparative Literature, Hofstra University, spring 1971. Distinguished Visiting Professor and Consultant, Albion College, April-May 1972. Prentiss M. Brown Distinguished Visiting Professor, Albion College, January-May 1973. Robert Norton Visiting Professor, Ohio University, September 1973-June 1974. Visiting Professor of Indian Culture, Hartwick College, September-October 1975. Eli Lilly Visiting Professor, Berea College, February-May 1977. Honorary Doctorate of Letters, Western Maryland College, 1977. Currently at work on the complete English version of the Mahābhārata. Born 1929, married Shyamasree Devi 1955; has a son Ananda, and a daughter Srimati. Recipient of the Padma Shri award in 1970. Delegate to Asian Poets' Conference, Bangkok, 1988; Cambridge Literary Seminar, 1989; Harborfront Poetry Reading Series, Toronto, Canada, 1989. Appointed Suniti Kumar Chatterji Lecturer of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata in June 2005. Seventy five cassettes (each of 90 minutes' duration) of P. Lāl reading his transcreation of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata are available from WRITERS WORKSHOP. In october 1999 P. Lal began a śloka-by-śloka public reading of the transcreated epic to a miscellaneous group every Sunday morning for an hour at the Library of Dharma and Culture in Calcutta to illustrate the importance of Vyāsa's work as an inspiring *oral* experience and not just a print-culture masterpiece, the long-term reading project to continue till the hundred thousandand odd slokas are exhausted. 300 hour-long CDs of this recording, taped live are available from WW.

Preface

A print-culture mini-preface to an oral mahā-epic is in order. Some guidelines for the Vyāsa aficionado:

1] My transcreation is the full "ragbag" version. It is the only complete, strictly śloka-by-śloka rendering, not excepting enjambements, in any language. It includes all the ślokas from the Southern and other recensions which are normally left out in the "authorised" North Indian recension. It also includes all ślokas from the Poona Bhandarkar edition that are left out or censored in the Southern and Northern versions. I believe in the sanctity of an all-inclusive Mahābhārata, and see no reason why such very Indian all-inclusiveness should not be respected by textual scholars who stress strict adherence to lexical principles, and pompously dismiss popular and folk passages and episodes as garrulous "interpolations".

2] I have tried to retain the oral, spoken quality of Vyāsa's epic, by which I mean that if Yudhiṣṭhira were speaking in English, this is the kind of English I think he would be speaking. To miss the sūta quality of the narative recited by Vaiśampāyana to Janamejaya at the snake-yajña in Naimiṣa forest is to do grave, irreparable injustice to Vyāsa (and to his amanuensis Gaṇeśa). This version is meant to be heard, not read; if read, heard as well.

3] I have tried to parallel the tightness of the Sanskrit śloka by the brevity of my prose renderings, and by an equal tightness of the English verse patterns. Padding, interpretation, and elaboration are avoided. Many Sanskrit words explain themselves (or are very satisfactorily defined in Webster's Third and other dictionaries). These are best left untranslated. My version is for the educated English-knowing Indian; non-Indians can eavesdrop and overhear. The Indian will know his tradition reasonably well; others may have to do some hard homework.

4] Where Vyāsa has Vāsudeva, I write Vāsudeva-Krishna; where Suyodhana, I write Suyodhana-Duryodhana. This applies to all characters: Bībhatsu-Arjuna, Jāmadagni-Paraśurāma, Devavrata-Bhīṣma, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, Pṛthā-Kuntī, Saubala-Śakuni, and so on. This "double-naming" is important because the name chosen by Vyāsa is pertinent in its context. It is a very natural and common Indian practice Diacritical marks have been omitted only in two words: Krishna and Brahmin.

5] The complete Sabhā Parva comprises Volumes 27-37 of the fascicules that appeared in monthly instalments in 1970-71. A brief List of Contents is provided on page 503; it is taken from

Madhusraba Dasgupta's excellent *Samsad Companion to the Mahābhārata* (Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata, 1999). The epic mahā-kathā is self-sufficient. I let the kāvya story speak for itself. No props, no crutches, no signposts – the sūta does not need them. The story's the thing, catching conscience of commoner and king.

6] This is a heavily, scrupulously revised edition. One great blessing of the literary life is that one can try to improve upon one's earlier mistakes; in one's real life, past karma is tyrannical, unchangeable, mercilessly unforgiving.

7] This śloka-by-śloka transcreation is entirely my own. It is an attempt to create a taste by which Vyāsa's epic may be enjoyed in English. It is not an attempt to cater to an existing taste for Sanskrit literature in translation. This needs saying because three earlier translations by me were, in a sense, not entirely by me: *Sanskrit Plays*, *The Mahābhārata of Vyāsā*, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki* (1981).

Great Sanskrit Plays in Modern Translation, published by New Directions in 1968 in the USA, was edited by its publisher James Langhlin (himself a poet, and a friend), and two well-known American writers to make the plays suitable for British American readers. To achieve that end I agreed to changes in style and idiom. The main aim was to make Sanskrit drama playable on the Western stage for English-speaking audiences.

I made no concessions for the second transcreation, published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in the seventies of the last century. This was *The Dhammapada.* This was done entirely to please myself, to fashion an appropriate style, to create perhaps a taste for that style, and I did not allow any change from any eminent source, however convenient or insistent.

This method I have also followed for this śloka-by-śloka complete version. It may not be perfect, but it is what it is, warts and all, and it is my own, ill-favoured or otherwise.

Regrettably, seduced by the lure of a large readership, I agreed to having an editor suggest changes in my condensed one-volume transcreation of *The Mahābhārata* which Vikas of New Delhi brought out in 1980. How different that version is from the śloka-by-śloka rendering can be easily seen. That Vyāsa can survive such wondrous mutations of his fifth Veda is a tribute to the imperishable power of his creativity.

Kolkata
July 2005

Dedication

To
the memory of
Rev. Fr. Robert Antoine, S. J.
who taught me Sanskrit
in St Xavier's School, Calcutta
1939-1945
whose excellent *A Sanskrit Primer*
is the preferred text in Kolkata schools
&
whose three books
of lightly carried scholarship
I published
through WRITERS WORKSHOP:
Kalidasa's *The Dynasty of Raghu* (tr.) 1971
Rama and Bards (on the *Rāmāyaṇa*) 1975
Greek Tragedy and Sanskrit Drama (criticism) 1985

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to Pradip Bhattacharya, an ex-student and Vyāsa co-afficionado, for many helpful suggestions that went into the corrected, revised edition of the Ādi Parva.

I N V O C A T I O N

नारायणं नमस्कृत्य
नरं चैव नरोत्तमम् ।
देवीं सरस्वतीं व्यासं
ततो जयं उदीरयेत् ॥

Nārāyaṇaṁ namaskṛtya
Naraṁ caiva narottamaṁ |
Devīm Sarasvatīṁ Vyāsaṁ
tato jayaṁ udīrayet ||

Obeisance to Nārāyaṇa,
god of gods!
Obeisance to Nara,
lord of men!
Obeisance to Sarasvati,
goddess of learning!
May success attend us
in the reading of this epic!

SECTION ONE

1 Paying homage to Arjuna
in front of Vāsudeva-Krishna,
Maya with hands folded in *prāñjali*
said these sweet words:

2 "O son of Kuntī,
you have saved me from angry Krishna
and rapacious Pāvaka-Agni.
What can I do for you?"

3 "O mahā-antigod," replied Arjuna,
"your gratitude is enough.
May good fortune go with you.
Think of us kindly, as we think of you."

4 "Bull-brave Bharata, lord of men," said Maya,
"your words become you.
Permit me
to be of some service to you.

5 I am a mahā-artisan – Viśva-Karman
the master-architect of the Dānavas.
Tell me, O son of Pāṇḍu,
what I can do for you.

6 In the past I constructed
many edifices for the Dānavas.
In addition, I planned and built
enchanting, luxurious

7 Pleasure-houses studded
with lakes and gardens,
I devised various kinds of weapons,
self-propelled chariots;

8 I laid the foundations of vast cities,
enormous-gated and multi-coloured areas.
O Phālguna-Arjuna!
Let me build something for you."

9 Arjuna replied,
"Because I saved your life,
you are thinking of a return kindness.
I will not accept your offer – I cannot.

10 But I do not wish to hurt your feelings either.
Therefore, O Dānava,
do what you will – but for Krishna.
And I will take it as done for me."

11 O bull-brave Bharata (continued Vaiśampāyana),
Maya's request posed a problem
for Vāsudeva-Krishna who began thinking:
Who should I ask him?

12 Finally, lord-of-the-world-
and-creator-of-creatures Krishna,
having thought it over carefully,
said to Maya:

13 "Son of Diti, finest of craftsmen,
if you really wish to please me,
build an assembly hall that you think
will please Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

14 Build an enchanting sabhā
no human will be able
to duplicate, though he sit inside
and observe its smallest detail.

15 Make a sabhā, Maya,
that blends all the excellences
of divine, anti-divine and human styles
of architecture."

16 Maya listened to Krishna,
and his joy knew no bounds.
He drew up plans for a splendid sabhā
for the Pāṇḍavas.

17 Krishna and Pārtha-Arjuna
introduced Maya
to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira and explained
the plans for the building to him.

18 O Bharata Janamejaya! Yudhiṣṭhira
received Maya with pūjā-respect
and Maya in turn gave him
the honour he deserved.

19 Then, O Janamejaya (continued Vaiśampāyana),
Diti's antigod son Maya
narrated to the Pāṇḍavas
the history of the Daityas,

20 After which he rested.
Some time later, after deep reflection,
Maya started work on the sabhā
of the mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas.

21 Following the wishes of the Pāṇḍavas
and of mahā-ātmaned Krishna,
the mahā-refulgent artisan Maya
first performed the auspicious initiation.

22 He fed thousands of pious Brahmins
on sweetened milk-and-rice *pāyasa,*
and gratified them
with gift-offerings of all kinds.

23 He measured out an area
of ten thousand square cubits,
suited for all seasons,
celestially, eye-enchantingly lovely.

[II:2:1-9]

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SECTION TWO

1 Krishna, pūjā-deserving Janārdana-Krishna,
spent some time in Khāṇḍava-prastha,
receiving the reverence and love
of the Pāṇḍavas.

2 Because he wished to see his father,
large-eyed Krishna sought Kuntī's
and Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira's permission
to go to Dvārakā.

3 Keśava-Krishna went to his aunt Kuntī
and prostrated himself before her,
his head touching her feet.
She smelt his head,

4 And embraced him. Next mahā-illustrious
Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna went to his sister Subhadrā
and, his eyes moist with affection,
spoke loving, truthful, simple words to her.

5 Sweet-speaking, gentle Subhadrā
revered him with bowed head,
and told him all that she wanted
conveyed to her relatives.

6 Vārṣṇeya-Krishna took leave of lovely Subhadrā
and blessed her;
then Janārdana-Krishna went
to Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī and the purohita Dhaumya.

7 Krishna, finest among men,
took leave of Dhaumya;
he consoled Draupadī
and bid her farewell.

8 One by one he took leave
of the other Pāṇḍavas;
surrounded by them, he looked
like Śakra-Indra among the gods.

9 The hero-of-the-Garuḍa-flag Krishna,
after the ordained ceremonial ablutions,
adorned himself
with ornaments.

10 Bull-brave Yādava-Krishna,
propitiated the gods and Brahmins
with garlands, mantras, perfumes,
and namaskāras.

11 And when all these ordained
preliminaries were over,
finest-of-Yadus Krishna, ready to depart,
emerged in the outer courtyard.

12 He presented plates of curd,
fruit and rice to the Brahmins,
who blessed him.
He did *pradakṣiṇa* before them,

13 And climbed into his swift, golden,
Tārkṣya-Garuḍa-flagged chariot,
taking with him his mace,
cakra, sword, his Śārṅga bow,

14 And other remarkable weapons.
Śaibya and Sugrīva pulled
lotus-eyed Krishna's chariot on that lunar day
of an auspicious constellation.

15 Out of respectful affection,
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira took the place
of Dāruka, Krishna's excellent charioteer,
and held the reins.

16 Mighty-armed Arjuna half-circled
in *pradakṣiṇa* before Krishna,
climbed into the chariot and fanned Krishna
with a gold-handled yak-feather whisk.

17 Brave Bhīma and the twins,
ṛtviks and the citizens
walked behind Krishna, holding
a large gold umbrella

18 With a *vaidūrya*-pearl-plated staff.
Krishna, slayer of his foes,
mighty Janārdana-Keśava-Krishna,
followed by the five brothers,

19 Shone like a guru among his loved disciples.
Govinda-Krishna took leave
of Pārtha-Arjuna, embracing him
with warm affection.

20 He took leave of Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīma,
after embracing them.
Nakula and Sahadeva offered him pūjā-respect.
He embraced them.

21 Then mighty Krishna,
famed subduer of hostile cities,
after travelling two *yojanas,*
advised Yudhiṣṭhira to return.

22 Rich-in-dharma Govinda-Krishna
took the dust of Yudhiṣṭhira's feet;
Dharmaraja-Yudhiṣṭhira lifted Keśava-Krishna up
and smelt his head.

23 Only then did the Pāṇḍava
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
say to lotus-eyed Krishna,
finest of Yādavas, "Go".

24 Madhūsūdana-Krishna promised to return,
and with great difficulty
succeeded in preventing the Pāṇḍavas
from following him.

25 Like Śakra-Indra to the celestial city
of Amarāvati,
Krishna went to his capital, joyfully,
while the Pāṇḍavas affectionately

26 Kept gazing at him
till he disappeared from sight;
and then they saw him in their minds,
still longing for a darshan of Keśava-Krishna.

27 Handsome Krishna gone,
the sons of Pāṇḍu
reluctantly returned to their capital,
but in their hearts

28 They still held fast
to Govinda-Krishna.
Meanwhile, Krishna, driving swiftly,
sped towards Dvārakā.

29 Behind him was Sātyaki, the Sātvata hero.
In front his charioteer Dāruka.
Devakī's son Krishna drove
with the swiftness of Garuḍa.

30 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
and his brothers,
accompanied by their friends and relatives,
entered their excellent capital.

31 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira took leave
of his friends, relatives,
brothers and sons, and devoted himself
to love-making with Draupadī.

32 Meanwhile Kesava-Krishna was welcomed
by the chiefs of the Yādavas
with Ugrasena at their head
when he entered Dvārakā.

33 He paid his respects
to his old father and noble mother,
and greeted his elder brother Balarāma.
Lotus-eyed Krishna sat down.

34 Janārdana-Krishna embraced Pradyumna, Sāmba,
Niśaṭha, Cārudeṣṇa, Gada,
Aniruddha, and Bhānu. With the permission
of the elders, he entered Rukmiṇī's palace

35 And mahā-fortune-favoured Maya
began making plans
for the massive sabhā
to be built for Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira.

Transcreated by P. Lal

SECTION THREE

1 Maya said to heroic Arjuna,
"Give me leave now to go;
but I will soon be back."
(continued Vaiśampāyana)

2 "I will build for you,
O Dhanañjaya-Arjuna," he added,
"a mansion that will be
the envy of the three worlds,
a celestial sabhā-
that will defy imitation.

3 A long time ago
when the Dānavas were performing
a yajña in northern Kailāsa
near the Maināka mountains,

4 Beside the Bindu lake,
I collected a huge heap
of rough gems and uncut diamonds,
hiding them in rājā Vṛṣaparva's sabhā.

5 If, O Bharata Arjuna,
they are still there, I'll use them
for the decoration of this sabhā
of the Pāṇḍavas,

6 Which will be studded
with all manner of gem-work.
Also, O great Kuru-descendant,
there's a club in Bindu lake

7 Belonging to the Dānava king,
with which he overcame
and slew all his enemies.
It is hard, heavy,
and golden-knobbed,
and it enchants the eyes.

8 It can kill all one's enemies,
it is as powerful
as a hundred thousand ordinary clubs.
It is the perfect weapon for Bhima,
even as the Gāṇḍiva bow
is perfect for you.

9 Also there is a mahā conch-shell
of deafening sound called Devadatta;
it was made for Varuṇa.
It is my gift to you."

10 With these words, Maya left Pārtha-Arjuna,
and hurried north-east
towards Kailāsa
near the Maināka mountain range.

11 There is the Gold-Horned mahā-gemmed peak
named Hiraṇyaśṛṅga,
there is the lake of Bindusāra,
where rājā Bhagīratha once lived.

12 He lived there for a long time,
eager to catch a glimpse of the Gaṅgā,
named Bhāgirathī
after him; there

13 The Lord of all living creatures
performed a hundred sacrifices;
there gem-studded sacrificial pillars
were erected, and gold pillars

14 Not mentioned even in the śāstras;
there thousand-eyed Indra,
husband of Śacī, achieved fulfilment
after many sacrifices.

15 There Bhūtapati Śiva, lord of the spirits,
the eternal lord of all life,
lived after creating the worlds;
there the spirits worshipped him.

16 There Nara and Nārāyaṇa,
Brahmā and Yama, these four and,
the fifth, Sthānu-Śiva, performed *sattra*-sacrifices
after one thousand yugas.

17 There, for the sake of dharma,
Vāsudeva-Krishna himself performed sacrifices
with the deepest śraddhā
for countless years.

18 There Keśava-Krishna planted thousands
and tens of thousands
of gold-garlanded sacrificial pillars
and erected many radiant altars.

19 Maya went there, O Bharata-Janamejaya,
and brought the mace,
the conch-shell, and the precious stones
from Vṛṣaparva's abode.

20 That mahā-antigod spirited away,
from under the watchful eyes
of rākṣasas and *kiṁkaras*,
all that hoard of wealth –

21 And used it to construct
an unparalleled sabhā,
so lovely, divine, jewel-studded,
that the three worlds acclaimed it.

22 To Bhīma he gave
that unexcelled club,
to Arjuna that marvellous,
second-to-none conch.

23 The noise pealing from that conch
made mortals shudder;
In the sabhā (continued Vaiśampāyana)
stood tree-tall pillars.

24 It covered an area
of five thousand square cubits;
it was beautiful to see;
it shone with the radiance

25 Of fire, with the radiance
of the sun, with the radiance
of the moon; its splendour shamed
the rays of the sun.

26 Drenched with celestial
and terrestrial beauty, it seemed
to glow by itself; it grew
like new clouds gathering;
it was spacious, entrancing,
serene; it was adorned

27 With the finest craftsmanship
on jewelled walls and portals,
in paintings and luxuries –
it was Viśvakarma's handiwork!

28 Even the Sudharmā sabhā
of the Dāśārhas,
even the abode of Brahmā
paled before deep-minded Maya's skill.

29 Maya appointed eight thousand rākṣasas,
called *kiṁkaras,*
with the task of guarding and maintaining
the assembly-hall.

30 They had blood-red eyes, mahā-bodies,
arrow-sharp ears;
they were fearful, mahā-powerful,
fully-armed traversers of the sky.

31 In the middle of the sabhā
he built a pool
where floated lilies with leaves of gems
and stalks of precious stones;

32 In that pool were gold-leafed flowers,
and vivid water-birds:
and blossoming lotuses grew
in its pellucid waters;
golden tortoises and fish;
steps of crystal descended to its edges.

33 Soft breezes stirred the flowers
in the pool; all around it
were slabs of expensive marble,
inlaid with pearls.

34 Many kings, seeing it for the first time,
so richly decked
with stones and pearls,
mistook it for land, and fell in.

35 In convenient parts of the sabhā
were large,
flowering, green-foliaged, cool,
shade-giving trees,

36 Making up clusters of gardens,
full of gentle fragrance,
In more pools sported *hamsas*,
kāraṇḍavas, *cakravākas* and other birds.

37 Breezes carried the scent of lotuses
and other flowers
to the rooms of the Pāṇḍavas,
delighting them.

38 Maya took fourteen months
to complete the sabhā.
As soon as it was finished,
he informed Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

SECTION FOUR

1 Then he went to Arjuna and said
(continued Vaiśampāyana):
"Ambidextrous Savyāsacī-Arjuna,
this is your sabhā.

2 In one portion of it lives
the mahā-powerful lord of the spirits. Kiṁkara.
Whenever you twang your bow,
he will roar to the clouds.

3 Your chariot resplendent like the sun,
your swift white horses,
and the magnificent ape-banner
that you fly –

4 All these are artifacts of Maya-made māyā.
The reverberation of your bow
will not be deadened by trees,
but rise flame-like above.

5 And your glory in battle
will grow like the roars of Kiṁkara;
like your ape-pennant,
it will never tire."
Maya embraced Arjuna warmly,
and left.

6 And rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
to celebrate the completion of the sabhā,
invited hundreds of thousands of Brahmins
to a feast,

7 And fed them sweet milk-and-rice,
honey and ghee, fruits and roots,
rice and peas,
sesamum-flavoured *jivanti*-vegetables,

8 Rice fried in ghee,
and a variety of other dishes.
He supplied all manner of viands,
to be chewed, sucked and drunk.

9 He offered them expensive gifts of robes,
and garlanded them.
He took all pains to please the Brahmins
who had come from many lands.

10 He gave each a thousand head of cattle.
O great Bharata-descendant Janamejaya!
Their shouts of joy and blessings
rose to the skies.

11 He propitiated the gods
with chanting and music,
and offered expensive incense as homage,
Then he entered the hall.

12 Athletes, actors, wrestlers,
bards and praise-chanters performed
for the entertainment
of Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira.

13 And when all the pūjā ceremonies
and amusements were over,
Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers lived
in the sabhā like Śakra-Indra in heaven.

14 The ṛṣis and the rulers
who had come from distant lands
sat with the Pāṇḍavas
in that magnificent sabhā.

15 Asita, Devala, Satya, Sarpimālī, Mahāśira,
Arvāvasu, Sumitra, Maitreya, Śunaka, Bali;

16 Baka, Dālbhya, Sthūlaśira, Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana, Śuka;
Sumanta, Jaimini, Paila, and we, Vyāsa's pupils;

17 Tittiri, Yājñavalkya, Lomaharṣaṇa and his son,
Apsuhobhya, Dhaumya, Animāṇḍavya, Kauśika;

18 Dāmoṣṇīṣa, Traibali, Parṇāda, Ghaṭajānuka,
Mauñjāyana, Vâyubhaksa, Pārāśarya, Sārika;

19 Balivaka, Sinīvāka, Satyapāla, Kṛtaśrama,
Jātūkarṇa, Śikhāvat, Ālamba, Pārijātaka;

20 Fortune-favoured Parvata, the mahā-muni Mārkaṇḍeya,
Pavitrapāṇi, Sāvarṇa, Bhāluki, Gālava;

21 Jaṅghābandhu, Raibhya, Kopavega, Bhṛgu,
Haṛibabhru, Kauṇḍinya, Babhṛumālī, Sanātana;

22 Kākṣivat, Auśija, Nāciketa, Gautama,
Paiṅgya, Varāha, the second Śunaka, ascetic Śāṇḍilya;

23 Kukkura, Veṇujaṅgha, Kālāpa, and Kaṭha –
All munis of dharma, discipline and dedication.

24 These and many other ṛṣis,
well-versed in the Vedas and Vedāṅgas,
sat next
to mahā-ātmaned Yudhiṣṭhira

25 And pleased the pure, gentle, dharma-rich king
with sacred stories.
Many Kṣatriyas also attended
on Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira:

26 The rich-in-dharma fortune-favoured Muñjaka, Vivirdhana,
Saṁgrāmajit, Durmukha, heroic Ugrasena;

27 Lord of the earth Kakṣasena, invincible Kṣemaka,
Kamaṭha the king of Kāmboja, mahā-muscled Kampana,

28 Who made the Yavanas tremble at his name,
Just as Vajradhara-thunderbolt-wielding Indra
frightened the Kālakeya anti-gods;

29 Also Jaṭāsura, and the king of Madra,
Kuntī, and the Kirāta rājā Pulinda,
the kings of Aṅga and Baṅga,
Puṇḍraka and Pāṇḍya, Uḍrāja, and Āndhra's king;

30 Aṅga, Baṅga, Sumitā, the great foe-crusher Śaibya,
The Kirāta chief Sumanā, the Yavana chief;

31 Cāṇūra, Devarāta, Bhoja, Bhīmaratha,
The Kaliṅga king Śrutāyudha, Jayasena of the Magadhas;

32 Sukarmā, Cekitāna, foe-slaying Puru,
Ketumat, Vasudāna, the Videha chief Kṛtakṣaṇa;

33 Sudharmā, Aniruddha, mighty-armed Śrutāyus,
Unconquerable Anūparāja, Kramajit, Sudarṣana;

34 Śiśupāla and his son, the ruler of Karūṣa,
The unbeaten heroes of the Vṛṣṇis – god-like

35 Āhuka, Viprthu, Gada, Sāraṇa,
Akrūra, Kṛtavarman, Śini's son Satyaka;

36 Bhīṣmaka, Akṛti, heroic Dyumatsena,
The fine bowmen Kekava and Yajñasena of Somaka;

37 Ketumat, Vasumat, both expert in all weapons –
These and other Kṣatriyas were present before Kuntī's
son Yudhiṣṭhira.

38 Also, all the princes who learnt bowmanship
from Arjuna
came there dressed in deerskin;
and the princes of the Vṛṣṇis –

39 Rukmiṇī's son Pradyumna, Sāmba,
Yuyudhana-Sātyaki, Sudharman,
Aniruddha, Śaibya –
all these lords of the earth were present.

40 Also present were
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's *sakhā*-friend Tumburu,
and other kings
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

41 And there were the gandharvas
and apsarās,
and Citrasena and his ministers,
skilled in music and dance,

42 All expert in beat and cadence;
also present were the *kinnaras*,
fluent in body-movements
and hand-gestures.

43 Under the supervision of Tumburu,
they entertained the sons of Pāṇḍu,
together with the assembled ṛṣis,
by singing

44 Entrancing songs in melodious voices.
These strict-vowed and truth-loving people
attended on Yudhiṣṭhira,
as the gods on Brahmā.

SECTION FIVE

1 Then, O Bharata (continued Vaiśampāyana),
in that assembly
of mahātma Pāṇḍavas and gandharvas,
arrived Nārada –

2 That excellent ṛṣi,
learned in the Vedas and Upaniṣads,
learned in the Purāṇas and *itihāsas,*
most knowledgeable
in the happenings of time-cycles –
Nārada, respected even by the gods.

3 Nārada knew all about the Nyāya philosophy,
he knew the truths of dharma,
the six branches of learning,
and subtle logic;

4 He was determined,
clear-minded, fine-speaking,
he had a brilliant memory,
he knew all about politics and statecraft,
he could distinguish
between inferor and superior;

5 He could draw quick conclusions,
given the evidence;
he could spot syllogistic fallacies
based on the five steps,
he could satisfactorily answer
Bṛhaspati himself;

6 He knew all about Dharma,
Artha, Kāma, and Mokṣa;
he saw with all-seeing vision
the worlds above, below, and all around;
he had mastered
the Sāṁkhya and Yoga philosophies;

7 He knew the science of war
and the tricks of diplomacy;
he could teach the six aspects of war –
aggressing, marching,
defending, manoeuvring, routing,
and treaty-making; he knew

8 All the śāstras, he was fond
of music, he was invincible
in argument. He was a man
enormously gifted.

9 The shining ṛṣi Nārada,
having travelled the world over
with some ṛṣis as companions.
finally arrived in the sabhā.

10 He was accompanied, your majesty,
by Pārijāta, Saubhya,
wise Parvata and Sumukha
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

11 The thought-swift ṛṣi Nārada
was delighted to be there.
He wished them well
and blessed dharma-rich Yudhiṣṭhira.

12 As soon as they saw him,
Yudhiṣṭhira, finest Pāṇḍava,
most learned in dharma, stood up
along with his brothers.

13 He bowed in deep humility,
greeted Nārada joyfully,
and courteously offered him
a luxurious seat.

14 He did *arghya* before Nārada,
offered him honey-food,
and lavish gifts of cattle,
jewellery and precious stones.

15 Nārada, pleased with the pūjā-respect
offered to him by Yudhiṣṭhira
and the Pāṇḍavas in the manner
ordained by tradition,
spoke to Yudhiṣṭhira these words
on Dharma, Kāma, and Artha:

16 "Is your wealth spent as it should be?
Do you delight in dharma?
Do life's pleasures satisfy you?
Or are you overburdened with them?

17 Noble king, are you consistent
in the practice of dharma and artha
in relation to Brahmins, Vaiśyas, and Śūdras –
as your great forefathers were?

18 Have you compromised dharma for artha,
or artha for dharma?
Have you compromised dharma and artha
for easily-seducing kāma?

19 O excellent victorious king, you who know
the importance of the opportune moment,
have you divided your time rightly
between dharma, artha, and kāma?

20 O king untouched by fault!
Do you apply the six royal attributes
to the seven means?
After evaluating your own
strengths and weaknesses, do you keep note
of your foe's fourteen powers?

21 Great Bharata, after carefully weighing
your and your enemies' powers
and making peace treaties, do you encourage
the eight major occupations?

22 Maharāja, have your seven departments of state
been bribed by your enemies?
Are they corrupt and indolent?
Are they loyal to you?

23 And have you made sure
that your secrets are not passed on
by your 'loyal', disguised spies,
or by yourself or your ministers?

24 Do you keep a vigilant eye
on what your friends, enemies,
and the frustrated citizens are doing?
Do you time your war and peace rightly?

25 Are you neutral to those
who are neutral to you?
Are you neutral to holy men?
Are your ministers devoted to dharma,

26 Are they of noble birth, and concerned
about your welfare? Can they distinguish
between should-be-done and should-not-be done?
Ministers are the pillars of kings.

27 Are they learned in the śāstras,
do they know how to keep a secret?
Are you certain that they are not susceptible
to your enemies' influence?

28 Do you sleep too much?
Are you awake when required?
At night, O artha-knower, do you think
of what is urgent and what's postponable?

29 I hope you do not take crucial decisions
all by yourself –
or take the help of too many advisers.
Are ministers' counsels kept fully secret?

30 Do you go about quickly accomplishing a task
that is useful to your kingdom
and requires elementary planning?
Such tasks deserve priority.

31 Do you know what your goals are?
Are you honest about them?
Do you start projects and abandon them?
Then start again? Are they aborted at source?

32 Do you entrust work to dependable,
incorruptible, practical assistants?
Brave one, I hope you do not divulge
the full plans

33 Of any major undertaking to anyone.
Partial divulgence will suffice.
And the tutors for the princes –
are they learned in the śāstras and dharma?

34 Are you prepared to prefer a pandit
over a thousand fools?
In emergency and crisis,
nothing helps like a learned man.

35 And your forts – are they well stocked
with money, food, water,
weapons, and war-missiles?
Do they have expert demolitionists and bowmen?

36 An intelligent, courageous, self-disciplined,
clear-thinking minister
can be of incalculable benefit
to a king or a prince.

37 Do you happen to have at least three spies
unknown-to-each-other
who report to you on the eighteen vital areas
of your enemy, and your fifteen?

38 Great foe-vanquisher, do you have
a well-organised espionage system,
and do you make sure your enemies
do not even suspect its existence?

39 Is your purohita self-effacing
and of pure blood?
Is he free of jealousy and pettiness?
Does the world honour him?

40 And the Brahmin who performs the agnihotṛ –
is he dignified, intelligent, austere?
Is he regular
in reminding you of sacrificial occasions?

41 And is your astrologer well able
to read physiognomy?
Can he correctly interpret omens,
can he predict calamities?

42 Have you taken care to appoint
responsible people
in responsible posts, easy-going people
in semi-important posts,
and only the least dependable
in the lowest posts?

43 Are your highest offices filled by men
whose integrity is unimpeachable,
whose family records
show complete trustworthiness?

44 Bull-brave Bharata, have you ever been guilty
of high-handedness?
Important orders which your ministers execute –
do they come always directly from you?

45 Have they ever looked down on you –
as straight men look down on fallen ones,
as wives on lustful husbands
in the clutches of kāma?

46 Can you put full trust
in your commander-in-chief?
Is he intelligent, brave, efficient,
persevering, and of noble birth?

47 Are you consistently respectful
to the generals of your army,
who surely know all about warfare,
and are disciplined and valiant?

48 Have you made arrangements
for the proper feeding and pay
of your soldiers? It would be criminal
to deny them these,

49 Because the commonest causes of mutiny
are arrears of pay
and insufficient rations. Those who know
say nothing is more disastrous.

50 Are the leaders of your kingdom
all of noble birth?
Are they prepared to sacrifice their lives
for you on the battlefield?

51 It is my hope that, in your kingdom,
charge of the military
is not in the hands of a man
who exercises excessive power.

52 The man who does any work
unexpectedly well –
does he get recognition from you
in higher pay and more amenities?

53 It should be a point of principle with you
to honour
men of learning and humility,
scholars in different fields.

54 Bull-brave Bharata, do you support
the wives and children of those
who gave their lives for you,
and those that have suffered for you?

55 Pṛthā-Kuntī's son, do you treat, as you would
your own son, an enemy
who, defeated in battle, helpless and afraid,
comes and begs for mercy?

56 O lord of the world,
do the people of the world
respect you as an impartial judge?
Are they ready to approach you
as they would their own father and mother,
in times of crisis?

57 Bull-brave Bharata, do you know
how to take advantage
of your enemy's weaknesses
by deploying quickly your three forces?

58 O vanquisher of foes, at the right time
do you know the twelve types,
and take note of all omens
before ordering a military attack?
And do you make sure that your soldiers
have been paid before the attack begins?

59 O mighty monarch, scourge of your foes,
do you take steps to give jewellery
and precious stones to your enemies' officers
without their superiors' knowing?

60 Pṛthā-Kuntī's son, are you certain
that your own passions are first conquered
before you go to subjugate enemies
who are slaves of their passions?

61 And before you order an offensive,
do you try out the four arts
of conciliation, money-gifts,
fomenting of dissension, and punishment?

62 Before you attack, do you secure
your own defences? When you march,
are you swift in striking and winning?
Are you protective after victory?

63 Is your striking force of four kinds
of armed troops, each with
eight constituent helps, excellently trained
by the best officers available?

64 For-vanquishing mahārāja! When you defeat
your enemy, when you order
the slaughter of your foes, do you keep in mind
the harvest-season, the risk of famine?

65 After you have conquered, do your workers see
that the activities of their enemy counterparts
are not interfered with?
Is there mutual assistance?

66 Mahārāja, are the personal attendants
who serve you food, dress you in robes,
and supply you with unguents,
trustworthy?

67 Are your stables, granaries,
treasury and female apartments
well-guarded by servants
devoted to your welfare?

68 I assume that you first assure yourself
of the reliability of domestic
and public servants; then your relatives;
then all the others, O lord of the earth.

69 Do you get regular reports
on the expenditure earmarked
for drinking and gambling,
and sexual pleasures?

70 And are all your expenses covered
by a fourth part of your income?
Or by a third?
Or by one-half?

71 Are you always generously feasting
and presenting gifts
to relatives, superiors, traders,
the old and infirm, the rich and the poor?

72 Do your treasury accountants and officials
in charge of income and expenses
always keep you informed of the exact position
of your income and expenditure?

73 I am certain that you do not dismiss
any officials whose work is satisfactory,
whose loyalty is unquestioned,
whose popularity is obvious.

74 O Bharata descendant, are appointments
to high posts made by you personally,
after screening the applicants
into good, indifferent, and weak?

75 O lord of the earth, is it your practice
to appoint people known to embezzle,
or those with weak wills,
or those who are immature?

76 Are your subjects in any way harassed
by thieves, or exploiters,
or under-age labour, or women power? Or by you?
Are your agriculturists happy?

77 Have you ordered large tanks dug
at convenient distances,
so that agriculture in your kingdom
is not at the mercy of the monsoon?

78 Are the peasants in your kingdom
ever lacking food and seeds?
Do you have arrangements for loans
at one per cent interest?

79 *Tāta,* my friend, are the four professions –
agriculture, trade, cattle-keeping,
and money-lending – conducted by honest men?
Your kingdom's happiness depends on this.

80 O rājā, are your five presiding officers
of city, fort, trade, land, and justice,
desirous of your kingdom's
welfare and prosperity?

81 Are your villages and towns
secure and fortified
in the event of a surprise attack?
Are you in full control of them?

82 Are thieves and criminals
in your cities and towns
tracked to their hideouts
by a determined police force?

83 Do you console and respect women?
I hope you do not place
excessive trust in them,
nor divulge secrets in their presence.

84 When, O king, news of any threat
is reported to you,
do you continue to sprawl languidly
in the women's inner apartments?

85 O lord of the earth! Do you sleep
in the second and third quarters of the night,
and ponder dharma and artha
in the last quarter?

86 Do you wake up at the proper time, and,
accompanied by your time-conscious ministers,
appear before your people
dressed in the royal robes?

87 O great foe-crusher, do you have guards
dressed in purple and decked
with ornaments, armed with swords,
always at your side?

88 Are you like Yama, god of justice,
impartial in sentencing the guilty
and acquitting the innocent?
Impartial to those you like and those you don't?

89 Pṛthā-Kuntī's son, do you care for your health
by taking medicines, by fasting,
by a systematic diet? Do you follow the advice
of elders in your mental problems?

90 The doctors who attend to your health –
are they expert in the eight branches
of medical science? Are they respectful,
are they loyal to you?

91 Do you, O lord of the earth,
from greed, or folly, or pride,
refuse to settle any dispute between two claimants
who seek your arbitration?

92 Do you, from greed or folly,
ever withdraw
the pensions of citizens who have sought
your protection in full faith?

93 Have your people ever been so influenced
by the bribes of your enemies
as to form an alliance of parties
against you?

94 Do you suppress your weak enemies
by a show of military strength,
and your strong enemies with diplomacy,
or with a mixture of force and diplomacy?

95 Are the chiefs of your kingdom
ready to pay homage to you?
In case of need should you order them,
will they give their lives for you?

96 Do you respect Brahmins and wise men
in proportion to their learning
in the different branches of knowledge?
Do you give them *dakṣiṇā*-gifts?
Such respect will earn you heaven.

97 Do you believe in the ancient Dharma
rooted in the three Vedas,
practised by all your forefathers?
Do you follow their rituals and traditions?

98 Do you entertain talented Brahmins
in your palace
with nourishing and delicious food?
And afterwards, do you give them *dakṣiṇā*?

99 With complete mental equilibrium,
do you practise the rituals
of *vājapeya* and *puṇḍarīka*,
with other requirements of a yajña?

100 I am sure you namaskāra
and bow before your relatives,
gurus, elders, gods, holy men,
propitious trees, and noble Brahmins.

101 O king without fault,
do you rouse anger and sorrow in others?
Are there always auspicious-minded men
standing by your side?

102 O king without fault, are you indeed all these? –
for these increase
a man's years, spread his fame,
and nourish dharma, kāma and artha.

103 A king whose conduct is patterned
after these principles
never sees his kingdom suffer and decline.
He is happy, he is the world-ruler.

104 I am sure that in your kingdom
no loved and respected honest man
is tricked into false charges of theft
by scheming, śāstra-ignorant officials.

105 And I am equally sure that bribery
does not make them let a culprit escape,
after he has been caught red-handed
and imprisoned.

106 Great descendant of the Bharatas!
Can your officials be corrupted
into giving unjust judgments in law-suits
involving rich and poor?

107 Atheism, lying, anger, carelessness, procrastination,
Ignoring wise counsel, laziness, restlessness of the five
senses;

108 Acting dictatorially, seeking advice of artha-ignorant
men,
Abandoning a settled policy, divulging secret plans;

109 Not doing what's beneficial, hastily taking military
decisions –
Are you free of these fourteen royal vices?

110 It does not matter
how firmly a monarch sits –
these fourteen vices are sufficient
to dethrone him.

111 Are you successful in the Vedas?
are you successful in wealth?
are you successful with your wife?
are you successful in śruti-knowledge?"

112 "How does one succeed in the Vedas?"
asked Yudhiṣṭhira. "In wealth?
With one's wife? How does one succeed
in knowledge of śruti?"

113 "The agnihotṛ ritual," replied Nārada,
"is the success of the Vedas.
Enjoying wealth and giving it away
means succeeding in wealth.
To succeed with a wife means
to enjoy her and have children by her.
Humility and gentleness show success
in knowledge of śruti."

114 Nārada of mahā-tapasyā finished and paused
(continued Vaiśampāyana);
then, looking at Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira,
he added;

115 “Do your tax-collectors take only
what is legally due
from the merchants who come from afar
to trade in your kingdom?

116 O rājā! Are merchants and traders
treated well in your kingdom?
Can they bring their merchandise
without getting cheated or harassed?

117 *Tāta!* My friend, do you listen daily
to words of dharma and artha
from elders who know what artha is
and can explain dharma and artha?

118 Do you make regular offerings
of ghee and honey to Brahmins –
tokens of the prosperity of your crops,
cattle, fruits, flowers, and dharma?

119 Do you personally inspect
what work is done for you?
Do you publicly honour your officials?
Do you respect them and reward them?

120 Do you see to it that your architects
and craftsmen are supplied
with all materials, and that they are paid
not later than four months after completion?

121 Mahārāja!
Do you respect the sūtras of experts
regarding the use
of elephants, horses, and chariots?

122 Do you carefully study the sūtras
concerning the use of war-weapons,
especially those dealing with bowcraft
and missiles for demolishing city-forts?

123 O king without fault!
Are you acquainted with all weapons,
including those of mystic mantras,
along with foe-paralysing poisons?

124 Have you safeguarded your kingdom
    from the dangers of fire,
snakes, and other animals, from epidemics,
    from the depredations of rākṣasas?

125 You who know so much of dharma,
    do you look with the eyes of a father
on the blind, dumb, lame, deformed,
    the friendless, and the homeless ascetics?

126 Mahārāja, have you conquered
    the six great evils of mankind –
sloth, fear, anger, weakness,
    cruelty and procrastination?"

127 God-like Nārada finished speaking.
    Mahātma Yudhiṣṭhira of the Kurus,
pleased with his words,
    praṇāma-ed him and touched his feet.

128 "I will follow your advice,"
    Yudhiṣṭhira said.
"I have benefited greatly
    from your instruction."
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira followed the instructions
    (Vaiśampāyana continued),
and assumed control
    of the sea-girdled earth.

129 "The rājā who looks after the welfare
    of the four castes," Nārada said,
"finds happiness in this world
    and gets the world of Śakra-Indra in the next."

SECTION SIX

1 After mahā-ṛṣi Nārada had finished,
Dharmarājā Yudhiṣṭhira offered him
the customary pūjā-respect; then,
at Nārada's indication, he said:

2 "*Bhagavan,* revered one, all that you have said
about dharma and justice is correct.
I will do all in my power
to follow those principles.

3 I do not doubt that the deeds
of our forefathers were righteous
and were performed with the idea
of setting the best example.

4 *Prabhu*! Lord! It is my earnest hope
that I will be able to emulate them.
But this is not easy, for they
were remarkably self-disciplined people."

5 Pāṇḍu's son, Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira,
received the words of world-travelling Nārada
with deep reverence.
He sat next to Nārada,

6 And meditated on their implications.
Then, in the middle
of that august assembly of chiefs and rājās,
he said:

7 "You are as swift as thought, O finest of munis.
You can roam at will
in all the worlds
and experience all that is in them.

8 Tell me this, O Brahmin:
Have you, in the course of your travels,
anywhere come across a sabhā
grander than this?"

9 Narada listened to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and smiled.
He replied, gently:

10 "*Tāta,* my friend, Bharata-rājā,
I have not, in the world of men,
come across a sabhā of precious gems
to equal yours.

11 Let me describe to you the halls
of Yama, ruler of the pitṛs,
of wise Varuṇa, of Indra, and of Kubera
who lives on the Kailāsa peak.

12 Let me describe
the sorrow-dispelling hall of Brahmā.
These halls incorporate divine and human styles
of architecture, and contain

13 In essence all the world's forms.
Gods, pitṛs, Sādhyas, ascetics,
and gentle ṛṣis worship in them.
Would you like to know more?"

14 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira and the Brahmins present
heard the words of Nārada,
and folded their palms in *prāñjali*
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

15 Mahā-minded Yudhiṣṭhira said
to Nārada, "Tell us everything
about those sabhās.
We are eager to hear.

16 What materials are used for what sabhās?
What is the total area of each,
the length and breadth?
Who attend in Brahmā's sabhā?

17 Who attend in the sabhā
of the rājā of the gods Vāsava-Indra,
in the sabhās
of Vaivasvata-Yama, and Varuṇa, and Kubera?

18 O ṛṣi of Brahmā,
tell us all.
Our curiosity is so boundless
that we can hardly wait."

19 When Nārada heard this,
his reply was:
"Listen, rājā, one by one,
I give you all the sabhās."

SECTION SEVEN

1 "Śakra-Indra's hall," said Nārada, "shines;
  it was the reward of his karma.
It was constructed
  by sun-effulgent Indra himself.

2 Its length: one hundred and fifty yojanas;
  breadth: one hundred yojanas;
height: five yojanas.
  It moves of its own will.

3 It removes lassitude, fear, grief, and decay;
  it is soothing, auspicious;
it has countless rooms and seats;
  celestial trees grow inside it.

4 Pṛthā-Kuntī's son, great Bharata-descendant,
  inside it on a lovely seat
sits Mahendra-Indra, lord of the gods,
  with Śacī, his enchanting wife.

5 Words cannot describe him.
  He sits there, crowned,
bright bracelets on his arms,
  dressed in pure white,
wearing multi-coloured garlands,
  with Fame, Glory and Loveliness at his side.

6 Attending on Śatakratu-Indra of a thousand yajñas,
  are the Maruts,
and such deities as guide
  the lives of householders.

7 And the Siddhas, the celestial ṛṣis,
  the perfected beings, Sādhyas, Maruts
and others all adorned with multitudes
  of golden garlands.

8 All of them have the forms of gods,
  and wear ornaments;
they wait on mahā-ātmaned Indra and worship him,
  the great foe-crushing rājā of the gods.

9 Also, O son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
there are the celestial, pure-minded ṛṣis,
cleansed of defects,
shining with fire-brilliance,

10 Full of energy, completely without sorrow,
untroubled by anxiety –
all soma-yajña performers.
Parāśara, Parvata, Sāvasṇi, Gālava,

11 Śaṅkha, Likhita, the muni Gauraśirā,
Durvāsas, Krodhana, Śyena, the muni Dīrghatamas;

12 Pavitrapāṇi, the second Śavarṇi, Yājñavalkya, Bhāluki,
Uddālaka, Śvetaketu, Tāṇḍya, Bhāṇḍāyani;

13 Haviṣmat, Gariṣṭha, Hariścandra the lord of the earth,
Hṛdya, Udraśāṇḍilya, Parāśara's son, Kṛṣivala;

14 Vātsakandha, Viśākha, Vidhātā, Kāla,
Karāladanta, Tvaṣṭā, Viśvakarman, Tumburu –

15 Some born in yonis, some not;
some living on air, some on fire –
all these ṛṣis worship thunder-wielding Indra,
lord of the world.

16 Sahadeva, Sunītha,Vālmīki of mahā-tapasyā,
Truth-speaking Śamīka, truth-firm Pracetas;

17 Medhāti, Vāmadeva, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu,
Marutta, Marīci, and Sthānu of mahā-tapasyā;

18 Kakṣivat, Gautama, Tārkṣya, the muni Vaiśvānara,
Saḍartu, Kavaṣa, Dhūmra, Raibhya, Nala, Parāvasu,
Svastyātreya, Jaratkāru, Kahola, Kāśyapa;

19 Vibhāṇḍaka, Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, Unmukha, Vimukha,
The muni Kālakavṛkṣīya, Āśrāvya, Hiraṇmaya;

20 Saṁvarta, Devahavya, heroic Viśvaksena,
Kaṇva, Katyāyana, Gārgya, Kauśika –
These and the divine waters and plants,
Faith, Intelligence, and Sarasvatī goddess of learning;

21 Artha, Dharma, Kāma, lightning, O Pāṇḍava
Yudhiṣṭhira
Rain-bearing clouds, winds, thunder-clouds;

22 The eastern point, the twentyseven flames of *havana*,
Agni, Soma, Indra's fire, Mitra, Savitā, Aryamā;

23 Bhaga, Viśva, Sādhya, Bṛhaspati, Śukra,
Visvāvasu, Citrasena, Sumana, Taruṇa;

24 The yajña dakṣiṇās to Brahmins, mantras, planets, stars –
All these, O great Bharata, can be found in that sabhā.

25 In that sabhā, O rājā,
enchanting apsarās and gandharvas
entertain with songs and dances
the rājā of the gods Indra.

26 They perform wonderful feats,
they chant sacred verses
to gratify the mahā-ātmaned slayer
of the anti-gods Bala and Vṛtra.
The ṛṣis of Brahmā,
the royal and divine ṛṣis,

27 All fire-brilliant,
sporting colourful garlands and ornaments,
pass in and out of that grand sabhā
in different chariots.

28 Bṛhaspati and Śukra
are always present there.
The ṛṣis I have named,
and other strict-vowed mahātmās,

29 Bhṛgu himself and the seven ṛṣis
who are as potent as Brahmā,
ride in and out of the hall
in chariots as resplendent as Soma's.

30 I have seen this sabhā of Śatakratu-Indra
called the Puṣkaramālinī,
the Hall of Lotus Garlands. Now, O mahā-muscled rājā,
I will describe the sabhā of Yama."

SECTION EIGHT

1 "Listen now, Yudhiṣṭhira, Pṛthā-Kuntī's son,"
continued Nārada, "to my description
of the hall of Yama, Vivasvat's son.
It was built by Viśvakarman.

2 That dazzling sabhā
is one hundred yojanas square, O rājā.
I cannot be sure; it is possible, O Pāṇḍava,
that it is even larger.

3 It is as glorious as the sun;
however you see it;
it is neither too cold nor too hot;
it enchants the heart.

4 Grief, decay, hunger and thirst
disappear in that sabhā;
no pain, no disappointment,
no debility, no ill-feeling.

5 Whatever gods or humans desire
can be had in that hall;
food, the most palatable imaginable,
is available in plenty –

6 To lick, to suck, to drink –
sweet, juicy, and of all other kinds;
exquisitely-scented garlands,
wish-granting fruit trees;

7 Cool water and lukewarm water,
delicious to the taste.
In that hall sit the royal sages
and the faultless ṛṣis of Brahmā.

8 *Tāta,* my friend, they attend on Yama
son of Vivasvat,
Yayāti, Nahuṣa, Pūru, Māndhātā,
Somaka and Nṛga;

9 Trasahasyu, rāja-ṛṣis Kṛtavīrya and Śrutaśravas;
Ariṣṭanemi, Siddha, Kṛtavega, Kṛti, Nibhi,
Pratardana, Śibī, Matsya, Pṛthulāksa, Bṛhadratha;

10 Vārta, Marutta, Kuśika, Sāṁkāśya, Sāṁkṛti, Dhruva,
Caturaśva, Śadaśrobhi, king Kārtavīrya,
Bharata, Suratha, Sunītha, Niśatha, Nala;

11 Divodāsa, Sumanas, Ambarīṣa, Bhagīratha,
Vyaśva, Sadaśva, Vadhyaśva, Pṛthuvega, Pṛthuśrvas;

12 Pṛṣadasva, Vasumanas, maha-powerful Kṣupa,
Ruṣadru, Vṛṣasena, Ratha, beflagged and charioted
Purukutsa,

13 Ārṣṭiṣeṇa, Dilipa, mahātmā Uśīnara,
Auśinarī, Puṇḍarīka, Śaryati, Śarabha, Śuci;

14 Aṅga, Ariṣṭa, Veṇa, Duṣyanta, Sṛñjaya, Jaya,
Bhāṅgāsuri, the second Sunitha, Niṣadha, Vahīnara;

15 Karandhama, Bāhlika, Sundyumna, mighty Madhu,
Ilā's son, the powerful ruler of the earth Marutta;

16 Kapotaroma, Triṇaka, Sahadeva, Arjuna,
The second Vyaśva, Sāśva, Kṛśāśva,
The earth-lord Śaśabindu;

17 Rājā Daśaratha, Kakutstha, Pravardhana,
Alarka, Kakṣasena, Gaya, Gaurāśva;

18 Jamadagni's son Paraśurāma, Nābhāga, Sagara,
Bhūridyumna, Mahāśva, Prthāśva, Janaka;

19 The rājā of Vena, Vārisena, Purujit, Janamejaya,
Brahmadatta, Trigarta, rājā Uparicara;

20 Indradyumna, Bhīmajānu, Gauraprṣṭha, Anagha, Laya,
Padma, Mucukunda, the second Bhūridyumna, Prasenajit;

21 Arṣṭanemi, Sudyumna, Pṛthulāśva, Aṣṭaka,
A hundred Matsyas, a hundred Nīpas, a hundred Gayas;

22 A hundred Dhṛtarāṣṭras, eighty Janamejayas,
A hundred each of Brahmadattas, Vīrīs, and Irīs;

23 Two hundred Bhīṣmas, a hundred Bhīmas,
A hundred each of Prativindhyas, Nāgās, and Hayas;

24 A hundred each of Palāśas, Bāśas, and Kuśas,
Śantanu, Indra of kings, and your father Pāṇḍu;

25 Uśāṅgava, Śatartha, Devarāja, Jayadratha,
The royal ṛṣi Vṛṣadarbha and his ministers;

26 And a thousand others of the Śaśabindus,
Who died after performing massive horse-sacrifices–

27 All these, O Indra of kings,
all ṛṣis and rulers
of remarkable achievements and wisdom,
waited on Yama in his sabhā.

28 Agastya, Mataṅga, Kāla, Mṛtyu,
And other yajña-performers, and yoga-perfected ones;

29 Also the different orders of pitṛs –
agniṣvātta, phenapa, uṣmapa, svodhāvat, barhiṣad –

30 The Wheel of Time, the recipient of ritual ghee,
All those ill-minded ones who died in the winter
solstice;

31 All the workers of Kālā-Yama who allot the ends of
humans
And non-humans; *śiṁśapa, palāsa, kāśa,* and *kuśa*
Trees and other plants in their spirit-essences –

32 These, and others, O king,
comprised the members
of the sabhā
who worshipped Dharmarāja-Yama.
There were so many
that I cannot name them all.

33 This sabhā can travel at will
wherever it pleases;
it is pure enchantment;
Viśvakarman built it after deep tapasyā.

34 O great Bharata,
it shines in its own brilliance;
famed sages of rigid vows and truthful speech,
who practise severe tapasyā,

35 Sages of profound mental peace,
whose pure deeds illumine their ātmans,
whose bodies are radiant
in spotless white dresses,

36 Sages adorned with ornaments and garlands,
wearing gold ear-rings,
bright with their holiness,
visit this great sabhā.

37 Mahā-ātmaned gandharvas and apsarās
fill its nooks and corners
with songs and instrumental music,
dancing and laughter.

38 Pṛthā-Kuntī's son, Yudhiṣṭhira,
everywhere in this sabhā
are celestial garlands,
melody, and sacred incense.

39 Hundreds of thousands of men of dharma,
wisdom and handsomeness
attend on Yama, lord of all creatures,
and pay homage to mahātmā Yama.

40 This, O rājā, is the sabhā
of the rājā of the pitṛs.
Let me now describe Varuṇa's hall,
the Puṣkaramālinī.

SECTION NINE

1 "The celestial sabhā of Varuṇa,"
continued Nārada,
"is incomparable; it has white walls and arches;
it is as large as Yama's.

2 Viśvakarman built it under the ocean:
celestial trees of precious stones
surround it; they blossom
lovely fruits and flowers.

3 And countless clusters of plants –
turquoise, yellow, black,
purple, white, and red-flowering –
are part of its splendour.

4 And hundreds of thousands
of exquisitely-plumaged birds
of many species perch on them
and fill the sabhā with sweet song.

5 It is enchanting, this sabhā;
its temperature is equable;
it is the ruling-seat of Varuṇa;
it has many excellent rooms

6 Expensively furnished, where Varuṇa
relaxes with his gorgeously-
attired-and-ornamented queen,
Vāruṇī.

7 In this hall the excellent Ādityas,
wearing divine garlands,
smeared with divine unguents and scents,
wait on Varuṇa, lord of the waters.

8 The Nāgas Vāsuki, Takṣaka and Airāvata,
Kṛṣṇa, Lohita, Padma, Citra the powerful one;

9 Kambala, Aśvatara, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Balāhaka,
Maṇinaga, Naga, Maṇi, Saṅkhanakha;

10 Kauravya, Svastika, Elāpatra, Vāmana,
Aparājita, Doṣa, Nandaka, Pūraṇa;

11 Abhīka, Śibhika, Śveta, Bhadra, Bhadreśvara,
Maṇimat, Kuṇḍadhāra, Karkoṭaka, Dhanañjaya;

12 Pāṇimat, brave Kuṇḍaka, lord of the earth,
Prahlāda, Muṣikāda, and Janamejaya –

13 All the Nāgas, radiant with broad hoods,
with maṇḍalas and auspicious marks, were present
with Vāsuki,

14 Seeing whom the ocean-lord Varuṇa
rose respectfully.
Vāsuki and the others greeted him
with palms joined in *prañjali.*

15 Sitting there, they added to the lustre of the sabhā.
These, Yudhiṣṭhira, were only a few of those present.

16 Rājā Bali, son of Virocana, and earth-conquering Naraka,
Prahlāda, Vipracitti, the Kālakhañja Dānavas;

17 Suhanu, Durmukha, Śaṅkha, Sumanas, Sumati,
Ghaṭodara, Mahāpārṣva, Krathana, Piṭhara;

18 Viśvarūpa, Svarūpa, Virūpa, Mahāśiras,
Daśāgriva, Bālī, Meghavāsas, Daśāvara;

19 Ṭiṭṭibha, Viṭabhuta, Saṁhlāda, Indratāpana,
And all the Daityas and Dānavas wearing ear-rings,

20 Lovely garlands and crowns, richly dressed,
Possessors of special boons, gifted with valour

21 And immortality, believers in rigid discipline and vows –
All waited on dharma-and-noose-wielding Varuṇa.

22 The four Oceans, the rivers Bhāgirathī,
Kālindī, Vidiśā, Venā, Narmadā, Vegavāhinī,

23 Vipāśā, Śatadru, Candrabhāgā, Sarasvatī,
Irāvatī, Vitastā, Sindhu, Devanadī,

24 Godāvarī, Kṛṣṇaveṇā, queen-of-streams Kāverī,
Kimpunā, Viśalyā, and Vaitaraṇī,

25 Tṛtīyā, Jyeṣṭhilāī, the mahā-river Śoṇa,
Carmaṇvatī, Parṇāsā, Mahānadī,

26 Sarayū, Vāravatyā, queen-of-streams Lāṅgalī,
Karatoyā, Ātreyī, the mahā-river Lauhitya,

27 Lāṅghātī, Gomatī, Saṁdhyā, Triḥsrotasī –
These, and other famous places of pilgrimage –

28 Rivulets, wells, ponds, springs, tanks,
Both large and small; the points of the heavens,

29 The earth, the hills and mountains,
All water-creatures, O great Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira,

30 Attend on mahā-ātmaned Varuṇa. In addition,
Gandharvas and apsarās, skilled in song

31 And instrument, praise the glory of Varuṇa.
Mountains, loaded with precious minerals,

32 Stand around Varuṇa, sweetly conversing.
Varuṇā's minister Sunābha, with his sons

33 And grandsons, waits on Varuṇa near the holy
Place of pilgrimage called "Gau" or Puṣkara.
All praise Varuṇā.

34 O bull-brave Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira!
This is the splendid sabhā of Varuṇa that I visited
In the course of my travels. Now to Kubera."

SECTION TEN

1 Narada continued: "O rājā!
Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera's sabhā,
is a hundred yojanas long
and seventy yojanas broad.

2 Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera built it
with the power of tapasyā, O rājā.
It is like the peak of Kailāsa,
it shames even the moon.

3 Because the Guhyakas support it,
it seems to rest in the sky.
Many golden palaces in it
make it lustrously beautiful.

4 Celestial scents pervade it;
glittering jewels adorn it.
It seems to float in the sky,
like cloud-pinnacles.

5 So rich are the paints on it,
they dazzle like lightning-flashes.
Rājā Kubera sits in the centre,
surrounded by his thousand wives;

6 His seat is sun-bright; everywhere
are lush carpets and lovely footstools;
he is dressed gloriously;
his ear-rings dazzle.

7 Soft, voluptuous breezes blowing
through forests of *mandāra*,
and laden with the fragrance
of groves of flowering jasmine,

8 Carrying heart-soothing lotus-scent
from the Alaka-lotus pond
and the garden of Nandana,
attend on Kubera.

9 Mahārāja! There the gods sing,
in the company of gandharvas
and ravishing apsarās,
songs of celestial mellifluence.

10 Miśrakeśī, Rambhā, Citrasenā, Śucismitā,
Cārunetrā, Ghṛtācī, Menakā, Puñjikasthalā;

11 Viśvācī, Sahajanyā, Pramlocā, Urvaśī, Irā,
Vargā, Saurabheyī, Samīcī, Budbuda, Latā; –

12 These apsarās and thousands
of other gandharvas and apsarās,
all skilled in the arts of dance and song,
attend on wealth-granting Dhanada-Kubera.

13 The sabhā is filled
with the enchanting melodies
and the instrumental music
of gandharvas and apsarās.

14 The gandharvas known as the Kinnaras and Naras,
Maṇibhadra, Dhanda, Śvetabhadra, Guhyaka;

15 Keśaraka, Gaṇḍakaṇḍū, mahā-powerful Pradyota,
Kustumburu, Piśāca, Gajakarṇa, Viśālka;

16 Varāhakarṇa, Tāmroṣṭha, Phalakakṣa, Phalodaka,
Haṁsacūḍa, Śikhāvarta, Hemanetra, Vibhīṣaṇa;

17 Puṣpānana; Piṅgalaka, Śoṇitoda, Pravālaka,
Vṛkṣavāsin, Aniketa, and Ciravāsas –
These and hundreds of other yakṣas were present.

18 The auspicious goddess Lakṣmī
and Nalakūbara can be found
in that sabhā. I and many others
visit it often.

19 Many Brahmā-ṛṣis and other ṛṣis also go there;
Many rākṣasas and mahā-powerful gandharvas

20 Wait upon the great lord of wealth, Kubera.
O tiger-among-rājās, there, with thousands of spirits,

21 One sees trident-wielding three-eyed Śiva,
never-tiring Devī Umā's husband,
Lord of all creatures,
slayer of Bhaganetra,

22 Śiva of the fearful bow!
Serene Śiva!
Surrounded by hunchbacked,
red-eyed spirits!

23 Screaming spirits!
Flesh-feeding spirits,
terror-instilling, wind-swift,
and variously-armed!

24 Cheerfuly the hundreds of gandharva chiefs,
Splendidly dressed – Viśvāvasu, Hahā and Huhū,

25 Tumburu, Parvata, Sailūṣa,
Skilled-in-song Citrasena, and Citraratha,

26 And others – offer worship to Kubera, lord of riches.
The Vidyādhara chief Cakradharman and his followers

27 Also attend on the lord of wealth. Many Kinnaras,
King Bhagadatta, and Kimpuruṣas do the same.

28 Mahendra, Gandhāmādana, and the rākṣasa chief
Vibhīṣaṇa,
Along with many yakṣas, rākṣasas and gandharvas,

29 Are there. Noble Vibhīṣaṇa waits upon Kubera,
his elder brother.
Himavant, Pāriyātra, Vindhya, Kailāsa, Mandarā,

30 Malaya, Durdura, Mahendra, Gandhamādana,
And both the celestial Indrakīla and Sunābha mountain
ranges,

31 And other hills, headed by Meru mountain,
Attend respectfully on the mahā-ātmaned lord of wealth.

32 Bhagavān Nandīśvara, Mahākāla,
And arrow-eared and sharp-toothed spirits –

33 Kāṣṭha, Kuṭīmukha, Dantī, Vijaya of strict tapasyā –
And Śiva's huge-roaring white bull-vehicle,

34 Along with innumerable piśacas and rākṣāsas,
Attend on Kubera, who is surrounded by servants.

35 Kubera, son of Pulastya, propitiated Śiva
By bowing to him and fulfilling his will,

36 Till one day mahātmā Śiva, pleased, made Kubera
His loved *sakhā*, and now Śiva attends on Kubera.

37 These glittering jewels, Śaṅkha and Padma,
Accompanied by the world's wealth, honour Kubera.

38 I saw with my own eyes Kubera's sabhā, which sails in the sky.
Now let me describe Pitāmaha-Brahmā's. Listen, O rājā."

SECTION ELEVEN

1 Narada continued:
"Let me try as best as I can
to describe to you the indescribable sabhā
of Brahmā Pitāmaha.

2 In the Age of the Gods, O rājā,
the Satya Yuga, Āditya Bhagavān
the Shining Deity descended from heaven
into the world of men.

3 He had seen the sabhā of Brahmā,
and he wanted, O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
to see what the world had to show.
It was then that he described to me

4 The celestial sabhā of Brahmā, O bull-brave Bharata,
as being not only immeasurable
but impalpable, a creation to spellbind anyone
who witnessed it.

5 My curiosity was roused.
I wanted to see this marvellous sabhā.
Therefore, O rājā,
I said to Āditya:

6 'Bhagavan, revered one, show me
this sacred sabhā of Pitāmahā Brahmā.
O lord of light,
highest of the highest,

7 What tapasyā must I do, *bhagavan*,
what incantations intone,
what rituals perform,
to see this defect eradicating sabhā?'

8 He listened to me, O excellent Bharata,
the thousand-eyed god,
the radiant god of day,
and he replied: 'One thousand years

9 Of meditation in the strength
of the Brahmā-vow is required.'
So I journeyed to the Himalayas,
and began the mahā-vow.

10 Finally, he appeared, radiant,
powerful, unblemished Sūrya,
Bhagavān Surya the untiring deity,
and he took me to Brahmā's sabhā.

11 Impossible, O lord of men,
for anyone to say 'It's like this',
for it amazingly changes
into indescribable shifting shapes.

12 I cannot even say what it looks like,
how broad it is, how long.
I have never, O Bharata,
seen anything like it.

13 But I know those who live in it are happy;
its temperature, O rājā, is equable;
hunger, thirst, neurosis
disappear within its walls.

14 It is constructed with jewels of all kinds.
It seems to have no foundations;
it does not decay;
it is eternal.

15 So remarkable is the self-glowing
Radiance of this dazzling sabhā

16 That sunlight, moonlight and fire-light
combined cannot equal
the unique brilliance
of its divine splendour.

17 O rājā! In its centre reposes Bhagavān Brahmā,
the Grandfather of Creation,
all by himself projecting the universes
with his divine māyā.

18 And all the Prajāpatis acknowledge
and honour his glory:
Dakṣa, Pracetas, Pulaha, Marīci,
the great lord Kaśyapa,

19 Bhṛgu, Atri, Vasiṣṭha, Gautama, Aṅgiras,
Pulastya, Kratu, Prahlāda, Kardama;

20 Atharvāṅgiras, the Vālakhilyas, Marīcipas,
Manas, Antarikṣa, Vidyā, Vāyu, Heat, Water,
Earth;

21 Sound, Touch, Form, Rasa, Smell, O Bharata,
Prakṛiti, the Modes and Primal Causes;

22 The mahā-radiant Agastya, heroic Mārkaṇḍeya,
Jamadagni, Bharadvāja, Saṁvarta, Cyavana;

23 Mahā-fortune-favoured Durvasas,
dharma-loving Ṛṣyaśṛṅga,
The ācārya of yoga,
Bhagavān Sanatkumāra of mahā-tapasyā;

24 Asita, Devala, truth-knowing Jaigīṣavya,
Foe-conquering Ṛṣabha, mahā-heroic Maṇi;

25 Eight-branched Āyurveda Science of Healing,
The constellated Moon, the ray-expansive Sun;

26 Wind, Ritual, Dedication, Prāṇa-Life Breath
And other mahā-vowed mahātmās wait on Brahmā,

27 Including Artha, Dharma, Kāma,
Ecstasy and Aversion, Tapasyā and Self-Control.

28 Also attending are the gandharvas and apsarās,
And the twentyseven Lokapālas,

29 Protectors of the worlds, Śukra, Bṛhaspati, Budha,
Aṅgāraka,
Śanaiṣcara, Rāhu and the other planets;

30 The Mantras, the Special Mantras, Harimat,
Vasumat,
The Ādityas with their chief, the two Agnis;

31 The Maruts, Viśvakarman, the Vasus, O Bharata,
The pitṛs, all kinds of sacrificial oblations;

32 The Ṛg, Sāma, Yajur, and Atharva Vedas,
And all the śāstras;

33 Sāvitrī, redeeming Durgā, the seven kinds of Speech,
Understanding, Patience, Memory, Wisdom,
Intelligence, Fame, Mercy;

34 The epic-itihāsa Histories, the four Upavedas,
the Vedāṅgas,
The Planets, the Yajñas, Soma, the deities;

35 The Sāma-Veda songs, the science of sacred chants,
Melody, Commentaries, Scholarly Argument;

36 Plays, Poems, Stories, Essential Abridgments, –
The guru-pūjā givers and other pure-minded ones
are present in the sabhā.

37 In that sabhā are Time's divisions: *kṣaṇa, lava, muhūrta,*
Day, Night, Fortnight, Month, the six Seasons;

38 Year
The Five Yugas
Fourfold Day
Fourfold Night
And the celestial
The Endless
Indestructible

39 Undecaying
Ever-lustrous
Wheel of Cosmic Time Kāla-cakra
And
The Wheel of Dharma-cakra
Aditi
Diti
Danu
Surasā
Vinatā
Irā

40 Kālīkā, Surabhī-devī, Saramā, Gautamī,
Prabhā, Kadrū, – all these goddesses and
mother-goddesses;

41 Rudrāṇi, Śri, Lakṣmī, Bhadrā, Saṣṭhī, Aparā,
Earth, earth-flowing Devī Gaṅgā, Hri, Svāhā, Kīrti,
Surādevi, Śacī, Puṣṭi, Arundhatī;

42 Saṃvṛtti, Āśā, Niyati, Sṛṣṭidevī, Rati –
These and other goddesses attend on
Prajapati Brahmā; also.

43 The Ādityas, Vasus, Rudras, Maruts, Aśvins,
The Viśvadevas, Sādhyas, Pitṛs, all thought-swift.

44 There are, O Yudhiṣṭhira,
seven classes of Pitṛs,
four with forms,
and three which are formless.

45 It is common knowledge
that the Vairāja, Agniṣvātta,
and Gārhapatya pitṛs wander
freely in heaven.

46 The Somapā, Ekaśṛṅga, Caturveda,
and Kalā pitṛs
are worshipped on earth
by the four castes.

47 Soma first propitiates them,
then they propitiate Soma;
having done so,
they worship Brahmā.

48 They worship him freely and cheerfully,
for he is radiant.
The Rākṣasas, Piśācas,
Dānavas, Guhyakas,

49 Nāgas, birds, various species of animals,
all moving and unmoving
forms of life,
worship Brahmā Pitāmaha.

50 The chief god Puraṁdara-Indra,
Varuṇa, Dhanada-Kubera, Yama,
Mahādeva-Śiva and his consort Umā,
always visit Brahmā's sabhā.

51 Mahāsena Kārtikeya, O Indra-among-rājās,
always worships Brahmā.
Nārāyaṇa himself, the celestial ṛṣis,
and the ṛṣis

52 Known as the Vālakhilyas,
all creatures born in yonis or not,
everything in the three worlds
moving and unmoving,
I saw in the sabhā of Brahmā
with my own eyes.

53 I also saw, O son of Pāṇḍu, Yudhiṣṭhira,
eighty thousand sex-sublimated ṛṣis,
and fifty thousand ṛṣis
who have fathered children.

54 All the dwellers of heaven
have darshan of Brahmā there,
praṇāma him with bowed heads,
and return to their original dwelling.

55 All those present – the Nāgas, gods,
Daityas, the twice-born,
the yakṣas, birds, Kāleyas,
the gandharvas and apsarās –

56 All who are guests of Brahmā
receive favours from him
who is the Worlds' Father,
the gracious Protector of life,

57 Wise,
Self-born,
Gentle,
Sweet-speaking,
Radiant
Lord of men.

58 There is always a commotion
in this sabhā, O lord of men,
with crowds of people always
coming and going.

59 Confusion and tension
are dispelled in this sabhā,
which shines with Brahmā-brightness,
the haunt of the Brahmā-ṛṣis.

60 O tiger-among-men, just as your sabhā
is incomparable in the world of men,
that sabha is incomparable
to anything I saw before.

61 All these sabhās I have described
I saw in the realms of the gods.
I am convinced your sabhā
is unequalled in the world of men."

SECTION TWELVE

1 Yudhiṣṭhira said:
"From what you said it seems
that all the world's rājās
are in Vaivasvata-Yama's sabhā.

2 Radiant one, you have said
that in Varuṇa's sabhā
are the Nāgas, the important Daityas,
the rivers and the oceans.

3 In the sabhā of Kubera
are yakṣas, Guhyakas,
rākṣasas, gandharvas, apsarās,
and bull-bannered Bhagavān Śiva.

4 In the sabhā of Pitāmahā Brahmā,
Grandfather of all life,
are the mahā-ṛṣis,
the gods and the śāstras.

5 And in the sabha of Śakra-Indra,
according to you,
are some other gods, gandharvas,
and many mahā-ṛṣis.

6 And you added, O mahā-muni,
the name of one king,
the royal ṛṣi Hariścandra,
in the sabhā of mahā-ātmaned Devendra-Indra.

7 What mahā karma of tapasyā
did Hariścandra do
to earn for himself a place
next to Śakra-Indra himself?

8 And did you, by any chance, O Brahmin,
meet my father Pāṇḍu,
the mahā-fortune-favoured one,
now dwelling in the realm of the pitṛs?

9 O firm-vowed ṛṣi,
did he say anything?
Tell me. Tell me, *bhagavan*, revered one.
I can hardly contain myself."

10 Nārada replied, "O Indra-among-rājās!
  Since you ask me to do so,
I will speak about the glory
  of mahātmā Hariścandra.

11 There was once a ruler of the Ikṣvāku dynasty
  named Triśaṅku:
he ruled in Ayodhyā,
  and was a friend of ṛṣi Viśvāmitra.

12 His wife was Queen Satyavatī,
  of the Kekayas;
and she, when her time came,
  conceived according to dharma;

13 And when the month of her delivery came,
  that mahā-fortunate lady
gave birth to a son named Hariścandra,
  about whom you asked.

14 He was one of the most puissant
  of the earth's rājās.
At one time, all the world's rulers
  came under his control.

15 Riding in his splendid chariot of gold,
  he subdued
all the seven islands of the world
  by the strength of his arms.

16 And when, mahārāja, his conquest of the world,
  her mountains and forests and woods,
was over, he began preparations
  for a massive Rājasūya-yajña.

17 All rulers, at his orders,
  brought expensive gifts at that yajña.
They were responsible for distributing food-gifts
  to the assembled Brahmins.

18 During that yajña, that lord-of-men
  gladly donated to the officiating Brahmins
five times as much wealth
  as each of them asked.

19 And when the yajña was over,
he pleased the Brahmins even more
by distributing all kinds of expensive presents,
and feasting them.

20 So gratified were the Brahmins
with the banquet
and the glittering jewels they received,
that they said to themselves,
'In prowess and renown
no king can match Hariścandra.

21 This is the reason, O rājā,
the name of Hariścandra
has a lustre more bright than that
of any other ruler.

22 On the completion of the yajña,
powerful Hariścandra,
undisputed ruler of his empire,
blazed with glory.

23 O bull-brave Bharata, all who die
on the battlefield without turning their backs,
go to Indra's sabhā
and live there joyfully.

24 Those who give up their lives
while practising severe tapasyā
also find Indra's sabhā
and shine there for many ages.

25 Listen to me, O Kuntī's son, O Kaurava descendant.
Your father Pāṇḍu,
amazed by Hariścandra's unfading prosperity,
gave a message for you.

26 When he discovered that I was going
to the world of humans,
he bowed to me and said,
'Tell Yudhiṣṭhira

27 He will succeed in ruling the world,
because his brothers are with him.'
He added, 'Remind him
to perform the supreme Rājasūya-yajña.

28 He is my son. If he does so,
  I, like Hariścandra,
will live blissfully in Indra's sabhā
  in the presence of Śakra-Indra.'

29 I said to him,
  'If I go to the world of humans,
I will inform your son.'
  This I have now done.

30 O tiger-among-men, O son of Pāṇḍu, Yudhiṣṭhira,
  act according to your father's wishes.
If you do so, you will be with your ancestors
  in Mahendra-Indra's sabhā.

31 This maha-yajña is the most difficult
  of all yajñas. The Brahma-rākṣasas
are forever finding ways
  of frustrating it.

32 Say the yajña has begun –
  suddenly a war breaks out,
and all Kṣatriyas are killed – the world's destroyed!
  One never knows
how the slightest obstacle
  can magnify into a calamity.

33 Think deeply, therefore, O Indra-among-rājās,
  what is best for you.
It is important to always safeguard the interests
  of the four castes.

34 May you prosper! May you be happy!
  May the Brahmins prosper with you!
I have answered in detail
  all that you asked me.
With your permission, I will now go
  to the capital of the Dāśārhas."

35 Then, O Janamejaya (continued Vaiśampāyana),
  Nārada left Pṛthā-Kuntī's son
and went away, accompanied
  by the ṛṣis who came with him.

36 After he left, Kaurava-Yudhiṣṭhira,
son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
along with his brothers
began thinking
of how best to perform the Rājasūya,
the finest-of-yajñas.

SECTION THIRTEEN

1 Yudhiṣṭhira sighed deeply
(continued Vaiśampāyana).
Ṛṣi Nārada's words troubled him.
The Rājasūya troubled him.

2 But he was inspired by the examples
of the ancient rāja-ṛṣis,
and by the accounts of their felicity
obtained by yajñas and good deeds,

3 Specially the example
of rāja-ṛṣi Hariścandra's marvellous yajña,
and so he determined to go ahead
with the Rājasūya.

4 Yudhiṣṭhira first honoured all the officials
in his court; they reciprocally honoured him;
then he sought their advice
on the Rājasūya.

5 O Indra-among-rājās Janamejaya!
He pondered their suggestions
with the deepest earnestness,
and was convinced that he should proceed
with the Rājasūya.

6 Keeping dharma in mind.
brave and energetic Yudhiṣṭhira
remembered that the welfare of his subjects
was his prime concern.

7 Yudhiṣṭhira, finest among men of dharma,
always absorbed
in the welfare of his subjects,
acted impartially towards all.

8 Discarding anger and prejudice,
he would say, "Let all have what they deserve".
The kingdom echoed:
"Excellent dharma! Excellent dharma!"

9 Because he adopted this fatherly attitude
towards all,
he became renowned as Ajātaśatru,
"the One Without an Enemy."

10 To him, all were like his family.
Bhīma was fair and just.
Bībhatsu Savyasācī Arjuna protected
the kingdom against attack.

11 Sahadeva dispensed justice according to dharma.
Nakula was gentle and humble as ever.
Fear and bickering vanished,
citizens attended to their sva-dharma.

12 The monsoon was timely,
and the kingdom prospered, including
moneylenders, yajña-preparers, tillers,
and tradesmen of all kinds.

13 Because the king himself practised dharma,
there was no extortion,
no exorbitant rent, no fear of disease,
fire, poison-killings, and curses.

14 Neither cheats, thieves, nor court favourites
were known to oppress the populace;
nor did they learn
to deceive each other.

15 Because Yudhiṣṭhira had dharma,
chiefs under him made it a point
to serve him faithfully
on the six major issues;

16 And traders and merchants
in the different fields of commerce
paid their taxes regularly.
The kingdom flourished.

17 Even luxury-loving voluptuaries
contributed to the prosperity.
Yudhiṣṭhira was accomplished – and patient.
He had control over all.

18 And it so happened, O rājā,
that even the subjects
of the lands he conquered loved him more
than they did their own parents.

19 Eloquent-tongued Yudhiṣṭhira
repeatedly consulted his brothers
and ministers on the advisability
of the Rājasūya-sacrifice.

20 Questioned by eager-for-the-yajña Yudhiṣṭhira,
his ministers advised him
in these profound
and sensible words:

21 "A king who wishes to be known
as an emperor
seeks the Rājasūya-yajña
– a yajña that brings him Varuṇa's fame.

22 O great Kuru descendant,
you have all the marks of an emperor;
for this reason we recommend
the holding of the Rājasūya.

23 You are in full control of your kingdom;
therefore, you should perform
the yajña of the six fires
with the Samā-Veda chants.

24 When the Rājasūya-yajña is over,
the performer is an empire-lord;
all yajña-rewards, including the *agnihotṛ's*,
are his; he is the all-conqueror.

25 Mahārāja, mahā-muscled hero,
you have reason to be worthy of this yajña.
We will obey you.
You will perform this yajña.

26 So, without delay or discussion, mahārāja,
proceed with the Rājasūya."
This was the advice given separately
and together by the ministers.

27 Yudhiṣṭhira heard these pleasing,
frank and profound words of dharma
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and found them acceptable.

28 Wondering if he deserved
these words of advice,
he again gave serious thought
to the matter.

29 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira, experienced in wisdom,
again sought the advice of Dhaumya,
Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa,
his brothers, ministers, and others.

30 "The Rājasūya is an emperor's prerogative,
I know," he said.
"I must be absolutely sure
that I am worthy of performing it."

31 O lotus-eyed Janamejaya
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
to this question of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
they replied:

32 "You are learned in dharma,
you should know
you are worthy of this mahā-yajña."
These words of the ṛṣis and ṛtviks

33 Were applauded by the ministers
and Yudhiṣṭhira's brothers.
Mahā-wise and self-controlled,
world-well-wishing Yudhiṣṭhira

34 Again revolved the matter in his mind,
assessing his abilities and means,
time and place,
income and expenses.

35 He knew that the wise,
who act after careful thought, never suffer.
He was convinced he should not depend·
on his judgment alone.

36 Because he knew the meaning
of great responsibility, Yudhiṣṭhira
decided that the best person to advise him
would be Janārdana-Krishna.

37 Krishna was
The Foremost Man
Immeasurably Powerful
Mighty-Armed
Birthless
Yet born-at-will
In the world of men –
Hari
Krishna.

38 Yudhiṣṭhira recalled the incredible feats of Krishna,
and concluded
that there was nothing unknown to him,
nothing he could not do,

39 Nothing impossible. So Yudhiṣṭhira argued.
And his mind was decided,
once and for all.
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira

40 Despatched a messenger to the guru of all people,
conveying greetings
and pleasing words that an elder reserves
for a younger.
Driving a swift chariot, the messenger
soon arrived among the Yādavas,

41 In Dvārakā. At the gates
of the city of Dvārakā,
he folded his palms in *prañjali*
before Mādhava-Krishna, saying:

42 "O mahā-muscled Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna!
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira, Dhaumya, Vyāsa,
Drupada and Virāṭa and other kings
are waiting for your darshan."

43 As soon as he heard the message
brought by the charioteer Indrasena,
Krishna hurried to meet Yudhiṣṭhira
who was waiting for his darshan.

44 His swift-horsed chariot sped
through many lands,
and brought him and Indrasena
to Indraprastha.

45 As soon as he arrived, he rushed
to Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Pṛthā-Kuntī.
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira embraced
and welcomed him with familial affection.

46 Bhīma received him warmly.
Happily he went to see Kuntī,
his father's sister.
Nakula and Sahadeva paid him homage.

47 He talked to Arjuna, who was overjoyed.
Then, having pleasantly rested,
he was approached
by Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira, who said:

48 "Krishna, I have decided to perform
the Rājasūya;
but deciding and doing are different.
You are wise in these matters.

49 Only he who can accomplish all,
who is honoured with pūjā-respect,
who is the king of kings,
has the right to perform the Rājasūya.

50 My friends and ministers, Krishna,
advise me to go ahead.
My own decision is that I will abide
by your advice.

51 Some ministers, because they are friends,
overlook weaknesses;
narrow-minded others will say only that
which is pleasing to me.

52 Some have convinced themselves
that only that is good for me
which brings them benefit in some way or other.
Their only interest is themselves.

53 But you – you are not selfishly motivated,
having conquered anger and desire.
I depend on you
to tell me what is right."

SECTION FOURTEEN

1 Krishna replied: All-guṇa-glorious mahārāja!
You are worthy of the Rājasūya.
You know all there is to know,
so I will say only a few words.

2 The men who now go by the name of Kṣatriyas
are inferior to the Kṣatriyas
who were once exterminated
by Jamadagni's son Paraśurāma.

3 Ruler of the earth, bull-brave Bharata,
you are familiar
with the tradition-based rules laid down
by those early Kṣatriyas.

4 All the different royal dynasties
and all the world's Kṣatriya-rājās
trace their descent
to Pururavas and Ikṣvāku.

5 O rājā! What happened was that the descendants
of Ilā's son Pururavas
and those of Ikṣvāku were split
into a hundred dynasties.

6 In fact, what we have today, O mahārāja,
are the far-flung and varied descendants
of king Yayāti
and the Bhoja dynasty.

7 And all the kings of this age
pay homage to the wealth and power
of the Bhoja descendants.
And it is king Jarāsaṁdha

8 Who, by overcoming the affluence
and power of the Bhojas,
elevates himself above all other
Kṣatriya rulers of the world.

9 Rājā Jarāsaṁdha holds undisputed sway
over the earth's central areas.
His aim is conquest by dissension.
His prowess is unchallenged.

10 It so happens, mahārāja,
that by shrewd political skill
Rājā Jarāsaṁdha has appointed himself
as the world's supreme monarch.

11 And illustrious Śiśupāla, under his overlordship,
serves as his commander-in-chief.
Standing before Jarāsaṁdha,
like a pupil,

12 Is māhā-powerful Vakra, king of the Kuruṣas,
an expert in māyā-warfare.
Two other mahā-valiant kings
enjoying the patronage of king Jarāsaṁdha

13 Are Haṁsa and Dimbhaka of great renown.
Dantavakra, Karabha,
and Meghavāhana acknowledge
the over-lordship of Jarāsaṁdha
who wears on his head the crown
with the world's most precious jewel.

14 The Yavana king who succeeded
in subduing Mura and Naraka,
the raja who is like Varuṇa himself,
the unparalleled ruler of the west

15 Called Bhagadatta, once your father's closest ally,
now bows his head to Jarāsaṁdha
in word and deed
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

16 But his heart is still on your side.
His bhakti for you is like the affection
of a father for a son.
The king who rules the south-west,

17 Your maternal uncle, brave Purujit,
disseminator of Kunti glory,
O great foe-chastiser, is the only one
you can count on your side.

18 The scoundrel of the Cedis,
whom I once spared,
is now honoured as lord of men by the Cedis,
and even styles himself 'Lord of Men',

19 Making himself the Puruṣottama
that I really am,
and puts on foolish airs – he too has accepted
the overlordship of Jarāsaṁdha.

20 So has the mighty king of Baṅga,
Puṇḍra and the Kirātas,
who goes by the name of Vāsudeva
or king Pauṇḍraka.

21 The king of the Bhojas, Indra's friend,
foe-smiting ruler
of a quarter of the world, subduer
of the Pāṇḍavas, Krathas, and Kaiśikas,

22 The great Bhīṣmaka, whose brother Ātri
is like Paraśurāma's own son,
has also gone over
to Magadha's monarch Jarāsaṁdha.

23 We, being related to him, wish him well.
But he cares little for our feelings.
He is always thinking of ways
to harm us.

24 Ignoring the glory and prowess
of his dynasty
Bhīṣmaka, blinded by Jarāsaṁdha's fame,
has succumbed to Jarāsaṁdha.

25 Frightened by Jarāsaṁdha's power,
the eighteen clans of the Bhojas
have fled and sought shelter
in the western regions.

26 The Śuraseans, Bhadrakāras, Bodhas,
Śālvas, Paṭṭaccaras, Susthalas,
Sukuṭṭas, Kulindas, and Kuntīs
have all done likewise.

27 The Śālvas, their brothers and followers,
the southern Pāñcālas,
the eastern Kośalas,
and those who lived in the Kunti lands,

28 The Matsyas, the Saṁnyastapādas
and other Kṣatriyas,
abandoning their northern territories,
have fled further southwards.

29 Terrified by Jarāsaṁdha's might,
all the Pāñcālas
have surrendered their kingdoms
and fled in all directions.

30 Some time back, ill-minded Kaṁsa
defeated the Yādavas
and married the two daughters
of Bṛhadratha's son Jarāsaṁdha –

31 Asti and Prāpti, Sahadeva's younger sisters.
This ploy
helped wicked Kaṁsa
to gain control over his relatives.

32 But his deed brought him only ill repute.
Nevertheless,
he continued to oppress the rājās
of the Bhoja dynasty.

33 They came to us,
seeking our protection.
By giving the daughter of Āhuka, Sutanu,
in marriage to Akrūra,

34 I did a favour to my relatives.
With the help of Balarāma,
I succeeded in killing both
Kaṁsa and Sunāma.

35 That, O rājā, brought only temporary respite.
Jarāsaṁdha, Kaṁsa's father-in-law,
rose against me;
all eighteen Yādava clans met;

36 And our deliberations ended with our believing
that even our total striking power
would be unable to defeat him –
not even in three hundred years.

37 He has two allies, Haṁsa and Ḍimbhaka;
they are like two gods;
they are the most powerful of powerful men;
nothing kills them.

38 When clever Jarāsaṁdha chose them as allies,
he became invulnerable
to the world's war-weapons.
That is my considered opinion.

39 Not just my opinion, O wisest of wise men!
That was, in fact,
the opinion of all the chiefs
who met and discussed.

40 Let me explain. Once there was
a powerful king – a different one –
named Haṁsa; Balārama killed him
in an eighteen-day battle.

41 O rājā! It so happened that the soldiers
shouted, 'Haṁsa is slain!'
and Ḍimbhaka got the impression
that his own brother had been killed.

42 Grief-stricken, he said, 'I cannot think
of living without my brother.'
He ran to the Yamunā, jumped in,
and drowned himself.

43 When subduer-of-hostile-cities Haṁsa
got news of this,
he too ran to the Yamunā, jumped in,
and drowned himself.

44 When rājā Jarāsaṁdha heard of their deaths,
O bull-brave Bhārata,
he retired to his capital,
deeply dejected.

45 When we learnt that Jarāsaṁdha
had returned to his capital,
we were delighted,
and prolonged our stay in Māthurā.

46 But when lotus-eyed Prāpti, Kaṁsa's wife
and Jarāsaṁdha's daughter,
repeatedly mourned her husband's death
in front of her father,

47 And pressed him to kill those
responsible for her husband's death,
we were all fearful, O mahārāja,
and we decided it was best

48 To follow our earlier plan and flee
from Mathurā. So we split up,
for the sake of convenience,
all the possessions we had,

49 And we fled, taking with us
our sons, cousins, and other relatives.
We made up our mind
to continue our flight westwards.

50 There is a beautiful city called Kuśasthalī,
your majesty,
beside the Raivataka range.
Here we camped.

51 We strengthened its forts, making them proof
against even the gods –
even women could fight from them,
leave alone the Vṛṣṇi mahā-chariot-heroes.

52 That is our city now,
and we live in it without fear.
O tiger-of-the Kauravas, when they recall
the inaccessibility of the Raivataka,

53 The Yādavas, descendants of Madhu,
are reassured that they
have nothing to fear from Jarāsaṁdha,
and they are happy.

54 Oh, we could repulse Jarāsaṁdha,
but we prefer the strategic
three-yojana-long Gomān mountain;
each yojana has three bands of sentries.

55 Each yojana ends with one hundred gates;
the great Vṛṣṇi heroes are its arches;
each Vṛṣṇi is guarded
by eighteen Yādava soldiers.

56 We are eighteen thousand brothers
and cousins in all.
Āhuka has one hundred sons,
and each son is like a super-god.

57 Cārudeṣṇa and his brother Cakradeva, Sātyaki,
I, Rohiṇī's son Balarāma, Sāmba, and Pradyumna–

58 These, O rājā, are the seven *atirathas.*
The others are: Kṛtavarman, Anādhṛṣti, Samīka,
Samitiṁjaya;

59 Kaṅka, Śaṅkha, and Kuntī– these are *mahārathas.*
The old king Andhaka's two sons, the rājā himself,

60 Are all tremendously powerful,
like fierce thunderbolts.
These ten *mahārathas* live in the middle territories,
among the Vṛṣṇis.

61 Vitadru, Jhalli, Babhru, Uddhava, Vidūratha,
Vasudeva and Ugrasena are the seven ministers.

62 Prasenajit and Satrajit
are the two close friends
who possess the Syamantaka jewel
dazzling with golden lustre.

63 O greatest of the Bharatas!
You are indeed the only one
fit to be an emperor
of all the Kṣatriyas.

64 Duryodhana, Śāntanava-Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Aśvatthāman,
Kṛpa, Śiśupāla, Rukmin, Dhanurdhara,

65 Ekalavya, Druma, Śveta, Śaibya, and Śakuni –
Without defeating them how can you perform
the Rājasūya?
But these lords of the earth are unlikely to seek battle
with one as glorious as you.

66 In any case, O rājā,
my opinion is that
as long as mahā-powerful Jarāsaṁdha lives,
you cannot perform the Rājasūya.

67 As a lion stacks up elephant carcases
in front of his mountain cave,
Jarāsaṁdha keeps Kṣatriyas
imprisoned in Girivraja.

68 Great foe-subduer! Jarāsaṁdha,
eager to sacrifice royal enemies
before the gods, has taken great pains
to supplicate Umā's husband, Mahātmā

69 Mahādeva-Śiva himself, with profound tapasyā.
In this way he has succeeded
in routing many of the earth's rulers
and has fulfilled his vow.

70 And by subduing all the kings, one by one,
he has become the all-ruler,
taking them prisoners,
and adding to his glory.

71 In fact, mahārāja,
so great was our fear of Jarāsaṁdha
that we left Mathurā
and fled to the safety of Dvāravati.

72 Mahārāja! A pre-condition of the Rājasūya
would be for you first
to release all the prisoners
and then kill Jarāsaṁdha himself.

73 Until you do this, O Kaurava-descendant,
most intelligent of men,
you are not worthy.
The performance of the Rājasūya requires it.

74 O bull-brave Bharata!
Work out of a way of eliminating Jarāsaṁdha.
With him out of the way,
it will be easy to subdue others.

75 O defectless rãjã, this is my opinion.
Think it over deeply, carefully.
Then act as you wish.
What do you think?"

SECTION FIFTEEN

1 “You are wise,” Yudhiṣṭhira said.
“What you say, none else can.
There is none in the world but you
to resolve all doubts.

2 There are rājās everywhere
involved in promoting their own good.
Not one has become emperor yet.
It is difficult to become one.

3 The man who appreciates the valour and glory
of others forgets self-praise.
Pūjā-worthy is the king
who is respected even by his enemies.

4 Noble Vṛṣṇi! Limitless like the gem-rich earth
are a man’s talents.
Just as wide travel brings experience,
a full life develops talents.

5 I think serenity is the best gift of life;
from serenity comes prosperity.
It is my feeling that after the Rājasūya,
I will gain serenity.

6 O Janārdana-Krishna! Many in my race believe
that one among them, sooner or later,
will become the foremost
among the world’s Kṣatriyas.

7 O defectless fortune-favoured Krishna!
The cunning and cruelty of Jarāsaṁdha
so frightened us
that we sought your refuge.

8 Now you tell me you are alarmed
by Jarāsaṁdha’s prowess too.
In that case, O invincible one, lord,
what chance have we?

9 Mahā-muscled Mādhava-Krishna,
tell me if you,
Arjuna or Balarama can kill Jarāsaṁdha.
Again and again I think, O Vārṣneya-Krishna,

10 Of this, and I do not know,
O Keśava-Krishna, what I should believe.
I trust you implicitly." Listening to this,
skilled-in-speech Bhīma spoke up:

11 "The lazy or weak rājā
who takes on any enemy
stronger than himself
collapses like an ant-heap.

12 Experience shows us that even
a weak king,
by alertness and skilful strategy,
can defeat a strong enemy.

13 Krishna is clever, I am strong,
Pārtha-Dhanañjaya-Arjuna victorious.
We are the three yajña-fires,
we will destroy Jarāsaṁdha of Magadha.

14 If you, O Govinda-Krishna,
advise Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira, he will win.
With you on our side,
victory is with the Pāṇḍavas!"

15 Krishna said, "Weak-minded people
act without thinking of the consequences.
No man should ignore
a conscienceless enemy.

16 Remember that Yuvanāśva's son Māndhātā's tact
brought all under his sway;
Bhagīratha did it by kind deeds,
Kārtavīrya by tapasyā, Bharata by force;

17 Marutta by his boundless prosperity;
this is how these five
became emperors,
each by his own special method.

18 If you, O Yudhiṣṭhira,
wish for undisputed rule,
think of these five ways,
and use them to achieve your goal.

19 The point, O bull-brave Bharata,
is that Jarāsaṁdha is an obstacle in your path.
A hundred royal families
have not been able to stop him.

20 His matchless prowess gives him confidence.
Jewel-decked rājās pay him homage.
His giant ego
is still not satisfied.

21 Over-dominance is not enough:
he attacks anyone wearing a crown.
There is not one king
who doesn't pay him homage.

22 A hundred kings, Pṛthā-Kuntī's son,
are under his power.
How can a vacillating, weak rājā
challenge his rule?

23 The rājās are kept captive,
like animals tethered for sacrifice
in the temple of Paśupati-Śiva. They suffer
the deepest agonies, O bull-brave Bharata.

24 A Kṣatriya who dies on the field of battle
must be considered fortunate.
Let us therefore prepare ourselves
against Magadha's ruler Jarāsaṁdha

25 Eighty-six rājās already pay total tribute to him;
fourteen more will make
the needed hundred
for the cruel king's coronation.

26 Anyone who prevents this from happening
will gain glory.
Anyone who defeats Jarāsaṁdha
will be the world-emperor."

SECTION SIXTEEN

1 “O Krishna,” asked Yudhiṣṭhira,
“will my selfishness to be world-emperor
ever make me send you to Jarāsaṁdha?
will I have the courage?

2 Bhīma and Arjuna are my eyes,
you are my mind, Janārdana-Krishna.
How will I live without my eyes
and my mind?

3 Even Yama, god of death,
cannot defeat the terrifying Jarāsaṁdha.
How will you succeed
where he cannot?

4 And who knows if this will not lead us
into greater disaster?
I think it is best that we withdraw
while there is still time.

5 Listen to me, Janārdana-Krishna!
I am unhappy about this.
I think we should give it up.
The Rājasūya is impossible!”

6 Pārtha-Arjuna with the excellent bow,
inexhaustible quivers,
and the ape-pennant, in the sabhā,
said to Yudhiṣṭhira:

7 “I have the bow, I have the weapons,
I have the arrows;
I have energy, friends, land, fame, bravery –
all very difficult to have.

8 Learned men speak highly
of the importance of lineage.
But I have the will too.
What is greater than will?

9 What good is a coward
born in a race of brave men?
What matters is a confident man
with the will to be brave.

10 The test of Kṣatriyahood, O rājā,
is a man who subdues his foes
and gains fame. The sole virtue
of willed bravery suffices.

11 Fill a man with all talents,
but take away willed valour –
and he's useless. All manly virtues
flow from willed valour.

12 Singleness of purpose, hard work,
and favourable circumstances
combined lead to victory.
What use is valour without caution?

13 How often one sees the case
of a physically strong man
routed and killed by his foes
because he was careless!

14 Cowardice further disables the weak,
rashness disables the strong.
If a rājā is bent on victory,
let him avoid both defects.

15 Nothing can be nobler for us
than to attempt to kill Jarāsaṁdha
and release the kings
he keeps ruthlessly imprisoned.

16 If we shirk this task,
the world will scorn us.
If we are worthy of greatness, O rājā,
why should we accept scorn?

17 Munis seeking peace of mind
will find saffron robes soon enough.
Imperial majesty is ours if we want it.
Let us fight!"

SECTION SEVENTEEN

1 “Arjuna gives proof,” said Vāsudeva-Krishna,
    “of how a scion of the Bharatas
should conduct himself –
    specially a son of Kuntī.

2 Who knows when death comes,
    at night or in the day?
Who says refraining from battle
    is the gate to immortality?

3 The duty of a man is simple:
    to attack his enemies
as enjoined by tradition.
    Nothing pleases the heart more.

4 If luck favours him,
    and he manoeuvres well, he wins.
If two fight, one must win.
    Both cannot win, both cannot lose.

5 If he plans poorly,
    he will be defeated and destroyed.
If both are equally matched,
    the outcome is deadlocked; both cannot win

6 This being so, let us plan well,
    face our foe, and kill him,
as a flood uproots a tree.
    If we hide our weaknesses,
and take advantage of his,
    what can prevent us from winning?

7 All sensible men are agreed
    that powerful foes should be combated –
specially the leaders.
    This is my opinion too.

8 And if we can succeed
    in breaking through the enemy’s secret service
to attack him,
    who will dare blame us?

9 Like the Inner Supervisor
in every human body,
Jarāsaṁdha sits unfadingly secure.
(But I see his doom coming.)

10 Our aim is to protect our relatives.
Either we kill him in battle,
or we die in the attempt,
and gain heaven."

11 "Krishna," asked Yudhiṣṭhira,
"who is Jarāsaṁdha?
Exactly who strong is he?
And why does he not perish
at your touch, as an insect perishes
in the lamp's flame?"

12 "Let me tell you, "replied Krishna,
"all about Jarāsaṁdha:
his strength and prowess,
and why he survives all our attacks.

13 You may have heard of Bṛhadratha,
the great rājā of Magadha,
A brilliant soldier, he commanded an army
of three *akṣauhīṇis.*

14 He was handsome, powerful, rich,
and incomparable in prowess.
His body always showed marks of yajña;
he looked like a second Śatakratu-Indra.

15 He was glorious like the sun,
patient like the earth,
like Antaka-Yama in righteous wrath,
like Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera in riches.

16 O great Bharata, just as the sun
floods the earth with rays,
Bṛhadratha flooded the earth
with his many inherited virtues.

17 This mahā-hero married the lovely twin daughters
of the king of Kāśi;
and secretly he promised both
that he would love them equally,

18 Not showing the least preference to either.
Like an elephant
in the company of two she-elephants,
this rājā passed his days happily;

19 For both his wives pleased him enormously:
and his youth passed
in enjoyments
of all kinds. Indeed,

20 His two wives were to him
like the two personified rivers,
the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā –
and he was the ocean.

21 But no son was born;
he performed many auspicious *homas.*
in order to get a son,
but all his attempts failed.

22 One day he heard that shining Caṇḍakauśika,
son of Kākṣivān
of the Gautamas,
tired of his tapasyā,

23 Had arrived in the capital
in the course of his wanderings,
and was sitting under a tree.
The rājā and his wives gave him jewels.

24 The truth-speaking, truth-devoted ṛṣi
said to the king,
"O Indra-of-rājās, I am pleased.
Great hero, ask a boon.'

25 The ṛṣi was pleased
with Bṛhadratha's generosity.
The mahātmā motioned the monarch
to sit near him.

26 Then Caṇḍakauśika asked:
'Your majesty, what brings you
and your wives to honour me
with these gifts?'

27 The king replied to the muni,
'I have no son.
O best of munis,
people say a sonless man is worthless.

28 I am now old. To be old, to have a kingdom
and not to have a son, has no meaning.
I and my wives
will do tapasyā in the forest.

29 A sonless man finds neither peace
in this world nor heaven after death.'
These words of the king
touched the ṛṣi with pity.

30 Bṛhadratha and his wives praṇama-ed the ṛṣi,
and the king,
his voice poignant with sonless despair,
said:

31 '*Bhagavan*, revered one, I have decided to renounce
my kingdom and go to the forest.
I am an unfortunate man.
Kingdom – boon – mean nothing to me.'

32 The muni sat under the shade
of the mango-tree, absolutely still.
He drew in his senses
in the trance of meditation.

33 A mango dropped in his lap
in the still air.
It was a mango unpecked by any parrot,
falling by itself.

34 The excellent muni picked up the fruit,
silently pronounced mantras on it,
and handed it to the rājā,
in order to give him a son.

35 The mahā-wise mahā-muni said to the rājā,
'Go, O rājā!
Your wish is granted.
Do not seek the forest.

36 O rājā! Forget the forest.
This fruit will give you a son.
Rule your subjects with dharma.
For that is a rājā's dharma.

37 Perform the different yajñas.
Feed Indra with soma-rasa.
Instal your son king, and only then
retire to an āśrama.

38 O lord of the earth! I bless your son
with eight boons:
He will respect Brahmins,
He will be invincible in battle,
He will never be battle-satiated,

39 He will be generous with guests,
He will console the needy and distressed,
He will be tremendously powerful,
His fame will spread everywhere,
He will have deep love and regard
for his subjects.'
These eight boons were granted by Caṇḍakauśika.

40 These words of the muni
made the intelligent monarch
lower his head at the feet of Caṇḍakauśika,
and he returned to his palace.

41 O bull-brave Bharata, he recalled his promise
of equal treatment
and gave the mango to both his wives
(continued Krishna).

42 His two lovely queens divided the fruit
into two halves,
and ate it. And because the muni
was a man of truth,

43 Both of them conceived as a result
of eating the fruit.
When the king saw that they were pregnant,
he was overjoyed.

44 At the proper time after their season,
O mahā-wise Yudhiṣṭhira,
the queens gave birth
to two lumps of body-flesh.

45 Each piece had one eye, one arm,
one leg, half a stomach,
half a face, and half an anus.
The queens were horrified.

46 The trembling sisters stared fearfully
at each other; then,
sorrowfully, they threw away the live half-bodies
to which they gave birth.

47 The two midwives collected the half-bodies,
wrapped them in cloth,
went out by the inner apartments' back door,
flung them on the road, and returned.

48 O tiger-among-men! Not long after, a rākṣasa-woman
called Jarā, a flesh-and-blood-devouring creature,
picked up the half-bodies
lying on the roadside.

49 Fate impelled her –
to make them casier to carry,
she joined the two half-bodies
into a single human form.

50 O bull-brave Yudhiṣṭhira!
As soon as she put the two halves together,
they combined into
a heroic-looking young boy.

51 O rājā! She was awe-struck, because the child
had a body hard and heavy as a thunderbolt,
and she could not carry him
as she had wanted to.

52 The boy shoved his copper-bright fists
into his mouth – and roared!
It was like the roar
of humbering storm-clouds.

53 Great foe-subduer,
those in the inner apartments of the palace,
alarmed by the deafening sound,
rushed out to find the cause.

54 And the sad, disappointed queens too,
their breasts heavy with milk,
rushed out of the inner apartments
to claim their son.

55 The rākṣasī saw them and the rājā
so eager for a son;
she saw that the child was very strong;
and she thought:

56 *I live in the kingdom of this son-eager rājā.*
I should not therefore kill the child
of this māhā-atmaned,
dharma-following monarch.

57 So she hid the child in her arms
as clouds hide the sun,
and assuming a human form,
she said to Bṛhadratha:

58 'I give you your son, O Bṛhadratha.
Take him. But remember,
I protected him. He was conceived
in the wombs of your two wives
by the Brahmin's boon. When the midwives
cast him away, I protected him.'

59 O excellent Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira,
the lovely Kāśī princesses
took the baby and drenched him
with streams of mother-milk.

60 The rājā now knew all and rejoiced.
He spoke to the rākṣasī,
standing there disguised
as a gold-complexioned girl:

61 'Girl with skin like a lotus-womb!
Who are you who gives me this child?
Lovely lady,
to me you look like a goddess.'

SECTION EIGHTEEN

1 The rākṣasī replied:
'May you be blessed, O king!
I am a rākṣasī; my name is Jarā.
I change shape as I please.
I live happily in your kingdom.

2 I am a rākṣasī
who wanders from house to house.
Self-born Brahmā created me and named me
Gṛhadevī, Goddess-of-the-house.

3 He gave me celestial beauty, and I am supposed
to destroy the Dānava-antigods.
The householder who with bhakti
paints me on the walls of his house

4 Receives my protection –
for I am young and love children.
He who neglects to do this,
is doomed to destruction and death.

5 A likeness of myself, in the company of children,
can be seen on the palace walls.
I am offered pūjā daily
with scents, flowers, incense, and food.

6 For which reason, I am kindly disposed
towards you. O dharma-following king!
It so happened that by accident
I came upon your son's body-halves.

7 Also, by accident, when I joined them,
they formed into your son.
You are blessed by fate, mahārāja,
I am merely the agent.

8 O lord of the earth!
Perform the rituals for this child.
This child will be known
in the world by my name.

9 Not just a child –
I can, with my śakti, swallow Meru itself!
I am pleased with the pūjā
I get here – so I return you your child."

10 With these words (said Krishna)
she vanished.
The king, along with his child,
returned to the palace.

11 He ordered all the rituals ordained
in the śāstras to be performed
And he introduced a *mahotsava*-festival
for the rākṣasī-goddess.

12 Bṛhadratha, great as Pitāmaha-Brahmā himself,
named the boy
Jarāsaṁdha,
the Child-united-by-Jarā.

13 The son of the king of Magadha
grew in size and strength,
like flames waxing when sacred ghee
is poured into them.
He shone like the bright-fortnight moon,
pleasing his father and mothers."

SECTION NINETEEN

1 “It was not long after this,”
Krishna continued,
“that Bhagavān Caṇḍakauśika of mahā-tapasyā
came again to the Magadha kingdom.

2 Brhadratha, with his ministers,
son and wives,
hurried happily from the palace
to receive him.

3 He washed the ṛṣis’s feet with water
and offered *arghya*-welcome:
then, O Bharata-Yudhiṣṭhira, he offered his son
and his kingdom to the ṛṣi.

4 The illustrious ṛṣi accepted
the king’s pūjā-respect,
and in a pleased voice
said to the king of Magadha:

5 ‘I know everything, O rājā,
by my super-sensuous vision.
O Indra-among-rājās,
let me tell you about the future of your son.

6 I will describe his handsomeness,
intelligence, prowess and courage.
All indications are
that he will prosper exceedingly.

7 He will possess all the noble attributes
that are possessworthy.
No other king will stand comparison
with your superbly strong son,

8 Even as no winged creatures can equal
the swiftness of Vinatā’s son Vainateya-Garuḍa.
Anyone who opposes him
will be crushed and destroyed.

9 What harm can a stream do to a mountain?
Similarly,
even the weapons of the gods
will not be able to harm him.

10 Of all who wear crowns,
he will be the greatest.
Like the sun, he will steal all others
of splendour.

11 They will perish like moths
perishing in the fire –
all those rājās with huge armies
who dare to oppose him.

12 Like the occan drinking in
the rain-swollen waters of rivers,
he will absorb the magnificent prosperity
of other rājās.

13 Like the earth which produces lavishly,
sustaining both good and not-good,
this mahā-powerful king will support
all the members of the four castes.

14 Kings will obey him
as all creatures obey the wind,
the all-nourisher, as dear to life
as the ātman itself.

15 This prince of the Magadhas,
mightiest of mighty men, will be able to see
with his physical eyes Mahādeva-Rudra-Śiva,
slayer of the anti-god Tripura."

16 With these words the great muni ended,
and went about his work,
taking leave
of the great foe-subduer Bṛhadratha.

17 The Magadha king returned
to his capital,
summoned his friends and relatives,
and installed Jarāsaṁdha as the new king.

18 Rājā Bṛhadratha, tired of worldly delights,
after Jarāsaṁdha's consecration,
accompanied by both his wives,
left the palace
and went to the forest
to live as an ascetic.

19 It was after his father and mothers
had gone to the forest, O lord of the earth,
that Jarāsaṁdha started his career
of vanquishing and subduing kings."

20 After a long sojourn in the forest-of-penance
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Bṛhadratha and his wives
went to heaven.

21 And as Caṇḍakauśika had foretold,
Jarāsaṁdha prospered and ruled his kingdom
after bringing the entire world
under his power.

22 It was some time after this
that Vāsudeva-Krishna killed Kaṁsa
and a bitter feud arose
between Jarāsaṁdha and Krishna.

23 O Bhārata Janamejaya,
great Jarāsaṁdha whirled a huge mace
ninety-nine times
and hurled it from Girivraja towards Mathurā.

24 Krishna of marvellous feats
was at that time in Mathurā.
That mace flew over ninety-nine yojanas
and landed near Mathurā.

25 Mathurā's citizens noticed this,
and reported it to Krishna.
The mace fell in a spot
called Gadāvasāna.

26 Jarāsaṁdha had two allies,
Haṁsa and Ḍimbhaka,
both skilled in politics, and counsel;
both invulnerable.

27 Earlier I told you all
about these two mahā-powerful heroes.
These two, combined with Jarāsaṁdha,
were the mightiest in the three worlds.

28 Mahārāja, that is why the powerful Kukura,
Andhaka and Vṛṣṇi tribes
wisely refrained
from clashing with Jarāsaṁdha.

SECTION TWENTY

1 Krishna continued:
“Haṁsa and Ḍimbhaka have drowned,
Kaṁsa and his followers killed.
Time now to kill Jarāsaṁdha.

2 He cannot be killed in battle
by the gods and anti-gods.
My advice is that we take him
in single combat.

3 I know planning, Bhima has strength,
Arjuna can cover us both.
Operating like three yajña-flames,
we can consume Jarāsaṁdha.

4 Let us go secretly to him.
I haven’t the least doubt
that he will involve himself
in individual combat with us.

5 His pride, fear of disgrace, and his rashness
will compel him
to accept Bhīma’s challenge
to fight.

6 One Antaka-Yama is enough for the end
of the world; and one mahā-powerful
mahā-muscled Bhīma is enough
to destroy Jarāsaṁdha.

7 If you know me at all,
if you have faith in me, do not delay –
pledge me Bhīma and Arjuna
this instant.”

8 Yudhiṣṭhira saw Bhīma and Arjuna
cheerfully waiting
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and he replied to Bhagavan Krishna:

9 “O Acyuta-Krishna, vanquisher of foes,
do not say this!
We trust you implicitly.
You are the lord of the Pāṇḍavas.

10 Govinda-Krishna, your counsel has always
been full of wisdom,
you never help those who are rejected
by Lakṣmi, goddess of prosperity.

11 As far as I am concerned,
Jarāsaṁdha is as good as dead,
his captive kings liberated,
and my Rajāsūya performed.

12 Jagannātha-Krishna, Lord of the universe, finest of men,
proceed in this mission with caution
so that it may
be perfectly accomplished.

13 What good is a man without health,
without artha, dharma, and kāma?
And what good am I,
O Krishna, without you?

14 Pārtha-Arjuna cannot live without Śauri-Krishna,
nor-Śauri-Krishna without Pāṇḍava-Arjuna.
Nothing in the world is impossible
for these two Krishnas. This I believe.

15 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma is handsome,
Bhīma is powerful, Bhima is mahā-famous.
With you to help him,
he can achieve anything!

16 Soldiers well-led are splendid,
soldiers ill-led are useless.
That's what wise men say.
A good leader is what soldiers need.

17 It is wise to let water
flow from high ground to low.
It is wise to take advantage
of existing water-channels.

18 What could be better for us
than to follow you, Govinda-Krishna?
You know the art of diplomacy,
you are respected all over the world.

19 Krishna knows means and ends,
Krishna is strong in wisdom and action.
Anyone bent on success
should follow the dictates of Krishna.

20 With Arjuna behind you,
O best of the Yādavas,
and Bhīma behind Arjuna,
we are sure to succeed!
Tact, strategy and strength
combined will bring victory."

21 When Yudhiṣṭhira finished,
Vārṣṇeya-Krishna, Arjuna and Bhīma,
all tremendously valiant,
started for the kingdom of Magadha.

22 They dressed up as shining-bodied
snātaka Brahmin novitiates.
Friends and relatives blessed them
with sweet words when they left.

23 They were brave, they shone
like the sun, the moon, they shone like fire.
Righteous wrath added lustre
to their effulgent bodies.

24 Seeing the twin-Krishnas and Bhīma,
all three invincible in battle,
all three dedicated to one aim,
the citizens considered Jarāsaṁdha as dead.

25 Krishna and Arjuna, the mahā-ātmaned pair,
are behind the working of the universe;
behind all actions
of Dharma, Artha and Kāma.

26 Leaving behind the Kuru country,
they crossed Kurujāṅgala,
and come to Lake Padma;
they passed the Kālakūṭa mountain,

27 Crossed the Gaṇḍaki, Mahāśoṇa,
Sadānīrā and other rivers,
all of which have their sources
in that towering hill.

28 Crossing the lovely Sarayū
they saw the eastern Kosalas:
crossing them, they entered Mithilā;
crossing more rivers,

29 Including the Gaṅgā and the Śoṇa,
they continued castward; travelling steadily,
disguised in kuśa-grass and tree-bark dress,
the heroes reached Magadha.

30 From the slopes of Goratha hill
they saw the capital of Magadha,
full of cattle, wealth and water.
Trees everywhere – an enchanting city.

SECTION TWENTY-ONE

1 “Look, Pārtha-Arjuna,” said Krishna,
“the lovely city of Magadha,
filled with cattle and other animals,
with an exhaustless supply of water,
with splendid mansions,
free from fear and disease.

2 Five large hills –
Vipula, Varāha, Vṛsabha,
Ṛṣigiri, and Caityaka
(the loveliest of them all) –

3 Five high-peaked, tree-studded hills;
five cool shade-givers,
all interconnected,
are guardians of Girivraja.

4 Exquisitely-scented *lodhra* trees
cover the slopes of these hills
with lovely foliage and flowers
that bend their branches.

5 It was here that rigid-vowed
mahātmā Gautama had Kākṣivat
and other sons by Uśinara’s daughter,
a Śūdra woman.

6 Which is why the race of Gautama
stays here and pays homage
to the rulers
of the kingdom of Magadha.

7 It was here, Arjuna,
that the kings of Aṅga and Baṅga came –
to visit Gautama’s dwelling
and stay here in joy and peace.

8 Look at these lovely *pippalas,* Pārtha-Arjuna,
and the glorious *lodhra* trees,
surrounding the house
where Gautama lived.

9 Here is where the great foe-crushing Nāgas,
Arbudas,
Śakravapis and Svastikas lived,
and also the mighty Maṇināga.

10 Manu made Magadha free
from the scourge of drought.
Caṇḍakauśika and Maṇimat
have blessed the land of Magadha.

11 On white-topped Vṛṣabha, Vipulā,
Varāha, Giriśreṣṭha, Caityaka,
and Mātaṅga hills are the homes
of ascetics and mahātmās.

12 On Vṛṣabha are the dwelling-places
of gandharvas, rākṣasas and nāgas –
the hill glows
with their radiant presences.

13 Jarāsaṁdha has control of a marvellous,
near-impregnable city.
But today it will be our purpose
to attack him and humble him."

14 With these words
mahā-effulgent Krishna and the two Pāṇḍavas,
Arjuna and Bhīma,
entered Magadha.

15 They moved into Girirāja,
city of smling, well-fed citizens
of the four castes,
city of continual festivity.

16 From the city gate they moved
to the hill called Caityaka,
which was the place of high reverence
and pūjā

17 By the race of Bṛhadratha
and the citizens of Magadha –
a lovely hill that was the constant delight
of the Magadhans.

18 It was on this hill
that Bṛhadratha had killed the demon
called Ṛṣabha, and fashioned
three massive *bherī*-drums from his skin,

19 Which reverberated for one full month
when once sounded.
Krishna and the two Pāṇḍavas smashed
the flower-decked drums on Caityaka,

20 And succeeded by this act
in placing their feet on the head
of their enemy. This was the beginning
of the doom of Jarāsaṁdha.

21 Pounding repeatedly
at the earth-firm, massive,
tall, ancient and venerable peak,
worshipped with copious

22 Offerings of scents and garlands,
the indefatigable heroes
succeeded in overcoming it.
Joyfully they entered the city.

23 Exactly at that instant
Brahmins learned in the Vedas
saw many inauspicious omens,
and reported them to Jarāsaṁdha.

24 The purohita made rājā Jarāsaṁdha
mount an elephant, and blessed
the performance by whirling lighted torches;
Jarāsaṁdha started a fast.

25 In the meantime, the Pāṇḍavas
with only their hands for weapons,
entered the city as *snātaka* Brahmins
in order to crush Jarāsaṁdha.

26 Wherever they looked they saw –
beautiful shops loaded with food and garlands,
with every luxury
conceivable by man.

27 Krishna, Bhīma and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
finest of men, looked and marvelled.
They snatched garlands
from the flower-vendors,

28 Adorned themselves and,
glittering with lovely-coloured robes
and ear-rings, they entered
the palace of Jarāsaṁdha,

29 As lions of the Himalayas
enter the sheds of cattle.
Their sandalpaste and aloe-smeared chests
were like *śāla*-trunks.

30 And the citizens of Magadha,
seeing these broad-chested,
śāla-trunked heroes with powerful necks,
were aghast.

31 These bulls-among-men walked straight
through three rooms – these mighty heroes,
confident and proud –
and approached the rājā.

32 Jarāsaṁdha stood up quickly,
saying, "You are welcome."
He had water and honey brought,
he did the welcoming honour,

33 He offered them cattle,
and showed other forms of respect.
Both Bhīma and Pārtha-Arjuna
maintained a strict silence.

34 It was mahā-intelligent Krishna
who said to Jarāsaṁdha,
"O Indra-among-rājās, my two companious
have taken a vow not to speak.

35 The vow ends at midnight.
Then they will speak to you."
The rājā housed them in the yajña-quarters,
and returned to his palace.

36 Exactly at midnight,
Jarāsaṁdha hurried to where
the Brahmins were quartered.
He was being true to himself.

37 King Jarāsaṁdha had made a vow
that even if he was called
by *snātaka* Brahmins at midnight,
he would go and meet them.

38 Mightiest of kings Jarāsaṁdha
saw the strange dresses
of the Brahmins, he was puzzled,
but respectfully stood near them.

39 Seeing him, O excellent Bharata-Janamejaya,
those powerful slayers of enemies
spoke to him
in these words:

40 "O tiger-among-kings! May good fortune be yours!"
Saying which,
they paused, and silently looked
at each other.

41 Jarāsaṁdha looked up
at the two Pāṇḍavas and the Yādava,
disguised as Brahmins,
and said, "Please be seated."

42 Shining with the glory
of three sacrificial fires at three yajñas,
the three bulls-among-men
sat down.

43 Truth-speaking Jarāsaṁdha
said to them:
"I know perfectly well
that no *snātaka* Brahmins

44 Wear garlands or put on sandalpaste.
Why do you have garlands,
why do your arms
carry bowstring scars?

45 You wear holy robes
and flowers that are out of season.
You say you are Brahmins.
You look like Kṣatriyas.
Give me the truth.
Truth is the adornment of kings.

46 You shattered the fortress
of Caityaka hill, and in disguise,
fearing my anger, slipped into the city
by another way. Why?

47 The strength of a Brahmin lies
in his speech.
Your actions are louder than your words.
Who are you? Tell me.

48 You don't accept my reverence.
What brings you here?
Why do you adopt devious ways
of coming to me?"

49 Mahā-minded skilled-in-speechcraft Krishna
listened to Jarāsaṁdha
and, calmly and seriously,
replied:

50 "You can call us *snātaka* Brahmins.
Brahmins, Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas –
all, O rājā, are entitled
to observe the *snātaka* vow.

51 The vow has some special rules,
some ordinary ones.
A Kṣatriya who observes the special rules
always prospers.

52 Flower-wearers prosper;
so we wear flowers.
Kṣatriyas are known for their valour,
not their speech. Son of Bṛhadratha,
Kṣatriyas do not speak much;
they prefer action.

53 The Creator chose to put
his own energy in a Kṣatriya's arms.
If you wish, O rājā,
it will be demonstrated today.

54 Intelligent men enter an enemy's house
not by the main door.
They use the main door for a friend.
Such is dharma.

55 We have vowed unshakeably.
Having pierced an enemy's defences
to complete our mission,
we do not accept his homage."

SECTION TWENTY-TWO

1 Jarāsaṁdha replied: "Brahmins!
I cannot recall
having ever harmed you in any wny.
I am sure of this.

2 How is it, O Brahmins,
that you treat an innocent man
as an enemy?
Is it honest to do this?

3 If a person's dharma is harmed,
he naturally feels insulted.
Even a mahā-chariot-warrior,
no matter how proficient

4 He is in the ways of dharma,
falls from favour and is doomed
to the fate of an evil-doer
if he harms an innocent man.

5 Those who know dharma know
that the Kṣatriya-dharma code is the best
in the three worlds.
Dharma-knowers praise the Kṣatriya code.

6 I strictly follow my sva-dharma:
I do not harm any of my subjects.
It seems to me that you accuse me
absolutely unjustly."

7 "Mahā-muscled hero," said Krishna,
"the head of a royal line
commands us.
We are here to uphold his dignity.

8 Haven't you, O rājā,
made Kṣatriyas captive?
And isn't this wrong?
How can you call yourself innocent?

9 How can a rājā, O king,
behave unroyally with other rājās?
You tortured them,
and wanted them sacrificed to Rudra-Śiva.

10 Your crime, O Bṛhadratha's son Jarāsaṁdha,
 may taint even us.
We cultivate dharma,
 and we are eager to protect dharma.

11 To sacrifice human beings to a deity –
 unthinkable!
How could you even conceive
 of such a sacrifice to Śaṁkara-Śiva?

12 You, a Kṣatriya, treating other Kṣatriyas
 as mere animals!
Jarāsaṁdha! You must be a fool!
 Who but a fool could think like you?

13 Actions are actions;
 actions breed fruits.
Even as the karma is, so is the fruit.
 Such is the law.

14 Our purpose is clear: to help those who suffer.
 We are here to kill you,
who killed our kinsmen,
 and so to benefit our race.

15 Do not think, O rājā,
 that there is no Kṣatriya in the world
to equal you.
 That would be foolish indeed.

16 There is no Kṣatriya, brave and dignified,
 who would not gladly
go to heaven fighting
 to save the honour of his caste.

17 It is good to keep in mind
 that Kṣatriyas treat war
as a yajña in which
 they immolate themselves.
With heaven as their goal,
 they conquer the whole world.

18 Study of the Vedas, deserved fame,
tapasyā, and death in battle
are four entries to heaven.
The first three are not always certain,
but death in battle
always gets heaven.

19 It is full of virtues.
Śatakratu-Indra of a hundred sacrifices
is in his Vaijayanta heaven
because he defeated
the anti-gods in battle,
by adhering to the Kṣatriya code.

20 You are proud of yourself,
you are proud
of your grand Magadhan army.
To fight you is to gain heaven.

21 O lord of men! Do not belittle others.
Many are brave.
Many have valour equal to yours,
or excelling yours –

22 And your fame, O rājā,
lasts so long as this is not known.
Let me tell you this:
your strength has found its match in us.

23 King of Magadha, respect your equals,
and give up your haughtiness.
Don't let your sons,
ministers and soldiers go to Yama.

24 Dambodbhava, Kārtavīrya, Uttara,
and Bṛhadratha – these kings
and their armies were destroyed
because they insulted their superiors.

25 All we want is to free the kings
you have made captive.
We are not Brāhmins.
I am Hṛṣīkeśa-Śauri,
and those two great heroes
are Pāṇḍu's sons.

26 We throw you an open challenge!
Fight us fairly, O Magadha king!
Either free the captive rājās,
or go to the abode of Yama."

27 Jarāsaṁdha replied:
"First I defeated the kings,
then took them prisoner.
What is wrong with this?

28 Isn't it part of his dharma, O Krishna,
that a Kṣatriya
should first defeat others with valour,
and then treat them as he likes?

29 I know a Kṣatriya's vow.
Don't expect me to show fear
and free the captives I have collected
for the sake of the sacrifice.

30 Let your troops face my troops,
or, if you wish,
let us fight singly, or in twos, or threes,
together or separately."

31 With these words (continued Vaiśampāyana),
Rājā Jarāsaṁdha
ordered the installation of his son Sahadeva,
and prepared for battle.

32 O bull-brave Bharata-Janamejaya, on the day of battle
Jarāsaṁdha thought
of his two famous generals,
Kauśika and Citrasena.

33 These were the two generals
whom I had previously mentioned
as Haṁsa and Ḍimbhaka,
respected the world over.

34 The finest of all mortals,
that tiger-among-men Krishna,
the slayer of Madhu,
the younger brother of Haladhara-Balarāma,

35 The greatest of self-disciplined men,
truth-devoted Śaurī-Krishna,
knowing that Jarāsaṁdha's death
was to be by Bhīma

36 And not by the slayer of Madhu,
refrained at Brahmā's request
from killing the tiger-like hero,
fiercely-valiant Jarāsaṁdha.

37 "But how," asked Janamejaya,
"did Mādhava-Krishna and Jarāsaṁdha
come to be such bitter enemies?
What wrong did Jarāsaṁdha do?

38 Who was Kaṁsa to Jarāsaṁdha?
Strange that Jarāsaṁdha
should dare to affront Krishna!
Why? Vaiśampāyana, tell me everything."

39 In the clan of the Yadus
(Vaiśampāyana replied),
was born Vasudeva, trusted minister
of king Ugrasena of the Vṛṣṇis.

40 Ugrasena's eldest son was Kaṁsa,
a magnificent person
who learned all the arts of warfare
to perfection.

41 Jarāsaṁdha's daughter was married to Kaṁsa
on the understanding
that her husband would be crowned king
immediately after marriage.

42 To fulfil this condition,
some of Ugrasena's ministers arranged
to have Kaṁsa crowned king
of the territory of Mathurā.

43 Opulence-and-power-drunk Kaṁsa
overthrew and imprisoned his father,
and began lording it
over Ugrasena's kingdom.

44 Ill-minded Kaṁsa never listened
to Vasudeva's counsel,
but Vasudeva stayed on in Mathurā
for the good of the kingdom.

45 Pleased, Indra-among-Daityas Kaṁsa
married Devakī to Vasudeva.
She was the daughter of Devaka,
brother of Ugrasena.

46 And when Devakī prepared to leave,
Kaṁsa got into the chariot
and personally escorted her
to Vasudeva.

47 Exactly at this moment,
a voice from the sky spoke clearly.
Vasudeva listened intently.
So did Kaṁsa.

48 The sky-voice said:
Kaṁsa! The eighth child
of the womb of the girl you escort
will be the cause of your doom.

49 Instantly, iniquitous rājā Kaṁsa.
pulled his sword from its sheath
and decided to put an end
to Devakī.

50 It was mahā-wise Vasudeva who,
gently smiling,
tried to soothe the furious Kaṁsa
with these words:

51 "My lord of the earth!
All dharmas declare a woman must not be killed.
How can you even think
of killing this defenceless girl?

52 O rājā! The thing to do is to kill
the eighth child born to her –
this is the simplest way of averting
the predicted calamity."

53 Great descendant of the Bharatas Janamejaya!
Rājā Kaṁsa was persuaded
by Vasudeva's reasoning,
and spared Devakī's life.

54 Many sun-bright sons were born to her.
Kaṁsa killed them all,
one by one,
even as they were born.

55 The seventh son of Devakī
was Balarāma.
Lord Yama, with the help of his māyā,
was able to switch the child
from the womb of Devakī
into Rohiṇī's womb.

56 He is therefore called Saṁkarṣaṇa,
"the Forcibly-Pulled-Out One".
He is also Baladeva, "the Strong God",
because of his prowess.

57 Devakī conceived again; and this time
it was Madhusūdana-Krishna;
Kaṁsa waited patiently
for the delivery.

58 When the hour of delivery approached,
Kaṁsa appointed his cruellest
and most trusted guards outside;
but the baby Krishna,

59 With the help of divine power,
cast a deep sleep on them,
and was spirited away
by Vasudeva to Vraja.

60 In place of Krishna,
Vasudeva brought the baby girl
of a cowherd and gave her
to king Kaṁsa.

61 Remembering the prophetic sky voice,
fearful Kaṁsa dashed the girl on the ground.
But she rose unharmed,
and walked away saying noble words.

62 Escaping in this way from Kaṁsa,
mahā-minded Vasudeva went to Gokula,
where he spent his days devoted to the care
of mahā-ātmaned Vāsudeva-Krishna.

63 Krishna grew up among cowherds,
as a lotus blooms in water.
He lived in secret, like fire in a stick.
Kaṁsa knew nothing.

64 Lord-of-Mathurā Kaṁsa delighted in persecuting
the cowherds of Mathurā.
Mahā-muscled Krishna came of age,
glowing with manly strength and lustre.

65 The frightened and harassed cowherds
in a group approached
lotus-eyed-Acyuta Krishna
and asked him for his help.

66 United they succeeded.
Krishna, son of Vasudeva,
was truly a mighty-armed hero,
he was able to kill Kaṁsa,

67 Along with Kaṁsa's brothers –
which was the desire of Ugrasena –
and he re-installed Ugrasena
in Mathurā.

68 When Jarāsaṁdha heard
Mādhava-Krishna had killed Kaṁsa,
he installed Kaṁsa's son
as king of Sūrasena.

69 In fact, he launched a massive attack,
defeated Vāsudeva-Krishna,
and had his own daughter's son
installed on the throne.

70 Illustrious-Jarāsaṁdha was flushed
with the pride of his mahā-power.
His only aim was to harass
and dishonour the Vṛṣṇis.
This is the story behind
the Mādhava-Krishna-Jarāsaṁdha feud.

71 It was Jarāsaṁdha's intention
to propitiate the lord of-gods-Śiva.
with sacrifices of rājās
for which reason he imprisoned

72 All rājās whom he defeated.
This is the whole story,
O bull-brave Bharata Janamejaya!
Listen now to how mighty Bhīma
succeeded in bringing about
the death of Jarāsaṁdha.

SECTION TWENTY-THREE

1 Krishna of the Yādavas, eloquent speaker
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
said to eager-to-fight-
rājā-Jarāsaṁdha

2 "O rājā, which of us three
do you choose for combat?
Which of us should start preparing
to fight with you?"

3 The rājā of Magadha, shining Jarāsaṁdha,
challenged in this manner,
chose as his adversary
Bhīma.

4 His purohita brought dried yellow
cowbile pigment, garlands,
auspicious articles,
and sedatives and stimulants.
All these were ordered by king Jarāsaṁdha,
ready for combat.

5 An illustrious Brahmin chanted
the ceremonial benedictions;
and Jarāsaṁdha, remembering his Kṣatriya dharma,
donned combat-dress.

6 He laid aside his crown,
and bound his hair tightly.
He stood up, like a shore-overpowering
giant ocean.

7 Valiant and intelligent rājā Jarāsaṁdha
said to Bhīma:
"Bhīma, I choose you.
Better if one is defeated by one's superior."

8 And saying this, mahā-radiant Jarāsaṁdha
rushed at Bhīma,
even as the anti-god Bala
once attacked Śakra-Indra.

9 Bhīma had consulted Krishna,
  and received Krishna's blessings.
He stood steady, ready to advance,
  restless for combat.

10 Those two tigers-among-men,
  using only their bare hands for weapons,
each eager to win,
  faced each other smilingly.

11 They slapped their arm-pits,
  lunged at each other's legs,
twining leg on leg.
  The combat-area shuddered.

12 They grasped at each other's necks,
  dragging, pushing, pulling,
limb grappling with limb,
  and shouting all the time.

13 They stretched their arms, tightened them;
  raised them, dropped them;
they strained neck against neck,
  forehead against forehead.
Sparks seemed to fly out
  like flashes of lightning.

14 All arm-techniques were tried,
  all leg-manoeuvres;
kicking and pounding,
  they struck at each other's chests

15 With clenched fists.
  They roared like storm-clouds,
they fought like two trunk-interlocked
  musth elephants.

16 Enraged and blood-smeared,
  they fought on, pushing and dragging,
glaring at each other,
  like two wounded lions.

17 Grappling the other by the waist,
  smashing fist into chest,
each hurled the other far
  across the combat-field.

18 Both were expert wrestlers:
each tried to close in
and, with cunning movement,
press and suffocate the other.

19 They performed the greatest
of all wrestling holds,
the *pṛṣṭhabhaṅga* or "Back-Breaker";
the *sampūrṇa-mūrcchā*, or "Sense-Crusher",
and the *pūrṇa-kumbha*
or "Breath-Choker";

20 Also the *tṛṇapīḍa*,
or "Grass-Rope-Arm-Wringer",
and *pūrṇa*-yoga,
or "Trick-and-Feint-Blow-Smasher".

21 So noisy was the combat,
O great Bharata, Janamejaya,
that thousands of citizens,
Brahmins, merchants, Kṣatriyas,

22 And Śūdras, came to witness
the two tigers-among-men.
The crowd swelled till it became
one solid mass of human flesh.

23 The slapping of arms,
the grappling of necks and legs –
the noise was thunderous,
like lightning striking a cliff.

24 Both were strong,
both fiercely delighting in duel;
both eager to win,
both alert to exploit the least mistake.

25 Bhīma and Jarāsaṁdha fought
like Vṛtra and Vāsava-Indra,
motioning the spectators away
with waves of their hands.

26 Shoving, slapping, pounding, and kicking,
they continued;
sometimes they struck so hard,
the head jerked back.

27 They hit at each other's knee-joints;
they taunted each other;
they struck with clenched fists,
like stone hitting stone.

28 Long-armed, massive-shouldered,
the two wrestling heroes
reached out with arms that resembled
huge iron maces.

29 The duel began in the month of Kārtika,
and they fought
without food, without respite,
till the thirteenth day;

30 Then, on the night
of the fourteenth day,
the mahā-ātmaned king of Magadha
showed signs of exhaustion.

31 Janārdana-Krishna looked at the tired monarch
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and gave Bhīma
this sensible advice:

32 "Kuntī's son, your opponent is weakening.
Don't press the attack.
If you do, it is possible
he may even die.

33 Conserve your energy, Kuntī's son.
O bull-brave Bharata,
fight with your arms only.
Give him an equal chance."

34 Pāṇḍava-Bhīma heard Krishna and,
aware of Jarāsaṁdha's condition,
the foe-slaying Pāṇḍava nonetheless
decided to kill his enemy.

35 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara Kaurava Bhīma
collected all his energy
with the express purpose
of destroying undestroyed Jarāsaṁdha.

SECTION TWENTY-FOUR

1 Bhīma, his mind made up,
his sole purpose being
to kill Jarāsaṁdha,
said to the Yādava descendant Krishna:

2 "O tiger of the Yādavas! Krishna!
This scoundrel stands before me
with girded loins, still fierce.
Why should I spare him?"

3 When tiger-among-men Krishna heard this,
he said to wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
with the purpose of seeing Jarāsaṁdha removed
as soon as possible:

4 "Bhīma, the strength that is yours
from the gods,
the strength you have from the wind-god –
use it now against Jarāsaṁdha.

5 This ill-minded wretch is doomed to die
by your hand.
I was given to know this
when Balārama fought against Jarāsaṁdha.

6 For this reason my elder brother Balarāma
left him alive on Gomanta-mountain.
How otherwise could he have escaped
from Balarāma's wrath?

7 You are the only one, mahā-powerful Bhīma,
who can kill him.
Think of Vāyu your windgod father,
and finish him off!"

8 Bhīma, foe-slayer, roused,
went up to Jarāsaṁdha,
lifted him high above his head
and whirled him around.

9 Bhagavān Krishna, keen to have Jarāsaṁdha
killed, looked at Bhīma,
picked up a bamboo-stick,
snapped it in two pieces
and flung them towards Bhīma.
This was a hint to Bhīma.

10 O bull-brave Bhārata Janamejaya!
Whirling Jarāsaṁdha a hundred times,
Bhīma pressed his knee
on the Magadha king's back,
gripped both his victim's legs,
and ripped him in two.

11 But the two pieces re-joined,
and Jarāsaṁdha
started battling afresh –
a fierce, horripilating fight!

12 It looked as if the whole world
was about to collapse.
The spectators stood horrified.
It was then that Mādhava-Krishna

13 For the second time took a bamboo,
snapped it in two,
and flung both parts away
from each other – another hint!

14 Bhīma understood.
This time he tore Jarāsaṁdha in two
and hurled both parts
in different directions – and roared!

15 Jarāsaṁdha's pieces seemed to moulder
and became lumps of flesh.
Then his skin and bones dried up.
His head shrivelled.

16 Bhīma's roars, and Jarāsaṁdha's shrieks
of agony as his body
was being torn in two, sent shudders
in every person's heart.

17 The Magadhans stood paralysed with fear.
Many women,
hearing the horrible roaring,
were prematurely delivered.

18 The citizens of Magadha thought
that either the Himālayas
were disintegrating
or the earth was being torn into pieces.

19 That night the three great foe-vanquishers
placed the rājā's corpse
beside the palace gate as if he was asleep,
and left.

20 Krishna readied the beflagged chariot of Jarāsaṁdha
and taking in it
the two Pāṇḍavas,
he freed the captive Kṣatriya kings.

21 After they had been freed,
the wealthy kings expressed their gratitude
to Krishna
with lavish presents of jewels.

22 Unscathed Krishna, rich in weapons and gems,
drove in Jarāsaṁdha's chariot
from Girivraja,
followed by all the rājās.

23 Krishna drove the chariot
named Sodaryavān:
riding in it were ambidextrous Arjuna
and immensely powerful Bhīma.

24 That divine chariot, invincible in war,
driven by Krishna,
with Arjuna and Bhīma in it,
enchanted the eyes.

25 This chariot was the one
in which Viṣṇu and Śakra-Indra
fought with the anti-gods
over Bṛhaspati's wife Tārakā
when much blood was spilt.
Krishna drove that very chariot.

26 It shone like molten gold,
kiṁkiṇi-bells tinkled on it,
its wheels roared like storm-clouds,
it always won in battle.

27 This was the same chariot
in which Indra succeeded
in slaughtering ninety-nine Dānava-antigods.
The three bull-brave heroes were delighted.

28 Great was the astonishment
of the Magadhans
when they saw mahā-muscled Krishna,
Arjuna and Bhīma in the chariot.

29 It was pulled by splendid horses
who sped like the wind.
Driven by Krishna,
it was mind-ravishing.

30 This marvellous chariot had a flagstaff
that seemed to hang in mid-air:
it glittered rainbow-like
for a full *yojana*.

31 As the chariot left the city,
Krishna thought of Garuḍa;
and instantly, Garuḍa materialised,
like a vast village tree.

32 Snake-consuming, heavy-weighing Garuḍa
descended on the magnificent chariot
and perched on it along with
other open-mouthed screaming creatures.

33 And the chariot dazzled all the more.
Like the thousand-rayed noonday sun,
it glowed with a glory
impossible to behold.

34 That divinely-fashioned flagstaff
was such that it never brushed
any overhanging tree, nor could any weapon
ever strike it.

35 Such was the scene as Krishna,
along with Arjuna and Bhīma,
emerged from Girivraja
on the cloud-roar-wheeled chariot.

36 King Vasu got this chariot from Indra;
Bṛhadratha got it from Vasu;
and from him it went
to Jarāsaṁdha, Bṛhadratha's son.

37 Mahā-muscled, lotus-eyed, mahā-famous Krishna,
emerging from Girivraja,
stopped near a flat territory
outside the city.

38 O rājā Janamejaya! The citizens, led by Brahmins,
hurried there to honour him
with all the ceremonies
ordained in the scriptures.

39 The freed rājās paid special homage
to the slayer of Madhu, Krishna,
and spoke to him the following
grateful eulogy:

40 "Mighty-armed hero!
Son of Devakī!
Accept our gratitude
For your act of dharma.
With Bhīma to assist you
And Arjuna at your side,
No wonder we were saved!

41 On this auspicious day
You plucked from the mire
Of terrible despair
In Jarāsaṁdha's lake
All the kings who were helplessly
Drowning in it.

42 O Viṣṇu! O descendant of the Yadus!
We were locked
In the hill-fort of Jarāsaṁdha.
It is our great good fortune
To be rescured by you
And to bring you renown.

43 Tiger-among-men!
We bow to you!
Order us to do
Whatever you wish.
No matter how difficult
The task you assign us,
Consider it accomplished
For your sake."

44 Mahā-minded Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna said to them,
accepting their homage:
"It is Yudhiṣṭhira's desire
to perform the Rājasūya.

45 He is a king of dharma,
desiring and deserving the glory
of imperial power.
Help him. I wish it so."

46 Immediately, O great Bharata Janamejaya,
all the assembled kings gladly said,
"We will do so",
to Krishna's request.

47 They lavished jewels on Dāśārha-Krishna.
Govinda-Krishna, out of kindness,
accepted only a small portion
of the offerings

48 Jarāsaṁdha's son, mahā-minded Sahadeva,
accompanied by his relatives and ministers,
arrived in a procession,
led by his purohita.

49 He praṇāmaed low before Krishna,
who was like a god among men.
He offered Krishna countless jewels,
and worshipped Vāsudeva-Krishna:

50 "Tiger-among-men Janārdana-Krishna!
Mighty-armed Puruṣottama-Krishna!
Whatever the crime of my father,
Remove it from your thoughts!

51 Govinda-Krishna! I come before you, lord,
Seeking your mercy.
Son of Devakī, I come to you in the hope
That my father's last rites will be done.

52 I seek the permission of Krishna,
Of Bhīma and of Arjuna;
I seek your assurance that I
Can go about this without fear."

53 Devakī's son Krishna, mahā-chariot-hero Bhīma,
and Arjuna
were pleased to hear these words
of Sahadeva.

54 In one voice they said: "O rājā!
Proceed with the last rites of your father."
Reassured by Vāsudeva-Krishna,
Sahadeva, with his ministers,

55 Returned to the capital.
Sandalwood and saffron-sticks,
cedarwood, black aloe wood,
were collected, a pyre constructed,

56 And his father's corpse laid on it.
And over the burning body
they scattered sandal-perfume and oil
and various kinds of ghee.

57 Flowers fell from all sides.
After the cremation,
Sahadeva and his young brother
performed all the water purifications.

58 Then only did Sahadeva come
from the city and face
Mādhava-Krishna, Bhīma, and Arjuna.
With palms folded in añjali he said:

59 "Lord, these cows, buffaloes, goats
and other animals are all yours;
I give them as my homage
to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
Or, if you wish otherwise,
command me; I will obey."

60 He was trembling with fear.
Puruṣottama-Krishna
gently accepted
all the expensive presents,

61 And later installed Jarāsaṁdha's son
Sahadeva king.
Installed by glorious Krishna
and having won his confidence,

62 Respectfully treated
by the two sons of Kuntī,
the mahā-muscled son of Jarāsaṁdha
re-entered his capital,

63 After which, bull-brave Krishna,
loaded with valuable presents,
departed from Girīvraja
with Arjuna and Bhīma.

64 Acyuta-Krishna and the two Pāṇḍavas
arrived in Indraprastha
and went straight to Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira,
informing him joyfully:

65 "Best of kings, fortune has favoured us.
Bhīma has killed Jarāsaṁdha.
The captive rājās
have all been liberated.

66 Fortune has been kind to us:
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna and Bhīma
have returned without a scratch.
Both are well."

67 Yudhiṣṭhira gave Krishna the pūjā-respect
he deserved;
then, out of joy, he embraced
Arjuna and Bhīma.

68 Victory was now his – with Jarāsaṁdha dead
through the agency of his brothers.
Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers
rejoiced.

69 Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira, overjoyed, said
to Janārdana-Krishna: "O tiger-among-men,
through your grace Bhīma succeeded
in killing proud and powerful Jarāsaṁdha.

70 Janārdana-Krishna! Now I am certain
there are no obstacles to my Rājasūya.
Give me the blessings of your mind and body
for this task.

71 Puruṣottama-Krishna, this fight by itself
has enhanced your glory.
The death of Jarāsaṁdha
has brought you added lustre."

72 Saying this, Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
presented the chariot of Jarāsaṁdha
to Govinda-Krishna, who was delighted.
He climbed into the chariot

73 With Phālguna-Arjuna at his side,
and showed his pleasure.
He was flattered to receive the chariot
from Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira.

74 Then Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers
went to the freed kings,
giving each the courtesy he deserved
before he left for his kingdom.

75 On instructions from Yudhiṣṭhira.
all the kings joyfully,
without wasting time,
hurried to their kingdoms.

76 This was the way the tiger-among-men
mahā-intelligent Janārdana-Krishna
succeeded in killing Jarāsaṁdha
with the help of the Pāṇḍavas.

77 His purpose accomplished –
the removal of Jarāsaṁdha –
Krishna took leave of Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira
Pṛthā-Kuntī and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,

78 Subhadrā, Bhīma, Phālguna-Arjuna,
and the twins.
He took leave of Dhaumya too,
and left for his capital Dvārakā

79 On that divinely-fashioned mind-swift chariot,
presented to him by Dharmarājā-Yudhiṣṭhira,
whose wheel noise filled
the horizon's ten points.

80 As he was about to leave, O bull brave Janamejaya,
Yudhiṣṭhira, leading the other Pāṇḍavas,
half-circled respectfully in *pradakṣiṇa*
round never-tiring Krishna.

81 Great Bharata-Janamejaya,
their victory was complete;
the fears of the rājās were removed;
so Krishna, Devakī's son, left.

82 The Pāṇḍavas, filled with glory,
passed their days happily,
giving pleasure
to their common wife Draupadī.

83 And rājā Yudhiṣṭhira looked after his subjects,
rigorously abiding
by the principles
of Dharma, Kāma, and Artha.

SECTION TWENTY-FIVE

1 Pārtha-Arjuna, with his unparalleled invincible bow,
his chariot,
and the ape-pennant,
said to Yudhiṣṭhira:

2 "Bow, weapons, fame, allies,
strength, kingdom, troops –
these hard-to-achieve possessions
are now all ours, O rājā.

3 Now what we need, O finest of kings,
is augmenting of our treasury.
I must arrange
to have tribute paid to us.

4 On an auspicious muhūrta of the conjunction
of planets
when the stars are favourable,
I shall set out
on a conquest of the northern areas
ruled by the wealth-god Dhanada-Kubera."

5 This greatly pleased Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.
The ministers, Vyāsa, and Dhaumya
were also pleased.
Percipient mahā-intelligent Vyāsa said:

6 "Kuntī's son!
Sādhu! Sādhu! Excellent! Excellent!
May good fortune attend you on this mission
of single-handed world-conquest.

7 King Pāṇḍu was fortunate
to have an illustrious son like you.
With your help, Dharma's son Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
will be lord of the world.

8 With your help, he will complete the Rājasūya.
Vāsudeva's Krishna's policy,
Arjuna's and Bhīma's power,
Nakula's and Sahadeva's skill –
these are all that Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira needs
to fulfil his ideal.

9 Go, Phālguna-Arjuna,
to the god-guarded lands of the north.
Defeat them,
and bring back with you all their treasures.

10 As for bull-brave Bhīma, let him go east.
Mahā-chariot-hero Sahadeva
can be given charge of the southern quarter.
Brave Nakula

11 Will proceed westwards.
Such is the advice, O bull-brave Pāṇḍavas,
that I now give you.
Heed it carefully."

12 All the Pāṇḍavas were pleased
with Vyasa's words.
They said, "We will abide, O finest of munis,
by whatever you advise."

13 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
who had listened carefully to Arjuna,
in an affectionate and serious tone,
said:

14 "O bull-brave Bharata-Arjuna!
Get the blessings of the twice-born –
and go. Cause grief to your enemies,
and joy to your friends.

15 Victory is bound to be yours,
O Pārtha-Arjuna.
Your aims are bound
to be fulfilled."

16 Pārtha-Arjuna left in the celestial chariot
he received from Agni.
Bhīma and the bull-brave twins,
Sahadeva and Nakula,

17 Carrying Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira's blessings,
also set out for conquest.
Arjuna subdued the northern territories
of the lord-of-wealth Kubera.

18 Bhīma conquered the East,
    Sahadeva the South,
and skilled-in-weapons Nakula
    conquered the West.

19 And Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira stayed back
    in Khāṇḍavaprastha,
enjoying luxurious dominion
    with his friends and kinsmen.

SECTION TWENTY-SIX

1 "Tell me in detail, O Brahmin,"
said Janamejaya,
"about the mahā-conquests of my ancestors.
I never tire hearing of their exploits."

2 Simultaneous conquests were planned
by the Pāṇḍavas (said Vaiśampāyana).
Let me first
describe Pārthā-Arjuna's exploits.

3 Mahā-muscled Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
with the most marvellous feats
of military skill,
first conquered the Kulinda king.

4 Kulinda annexed,
he subdued the Kālakūṭas and Ānartas;
then moved into and overran
the Sumaṇḍala kingdom.

5 Then, rājā Janamejaya,
ambidextrous-Savyasācī-Arjuna
conquered the island of Śākala
and defeated king Prativindhya.

6 Śākala was one of the earth's
seven main islands;
many kings ruled it;
a fearful carnage took place.

7 But ultimately, O bull-brave Janamejaya,
victory went to Arjuna.
Taking them as allies, Arjuna attacked
the kingdom of Prāgjyotiṣa,

8 Ruled by rājā Bhagadatta.
A tremendous battle resulted
between mahā-ātmaned Arjuna
and Bhagadatta's armies.

9 The Kirātas and the Cīnas
supported Bhagadatta;
also supporting him were many warrior races
of the coastline.

10 Eight days that battle raged.
Noticing Arjuna in no way fatigued,
rājā Bhagadatta smiled
and said to him:

11 "Mahā-muscled hero, great Kaurava-descendant,
your energy is impressive.
No wonder! – for you were the one
who humbled Pākaśāsana-Indra in battle.

12 *Tāta!* Dear one!
I am Mahendra-Śakra-Indra's friend,
and in no way inferior to him –
yet I find I am no match for you.

13 What do you wish,
O mahā-muscled son of Pāṇḍu?
What would you like me to do for you?
Tell me, my son: I will do it."

14 Arjuna said: "Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Dharma,
is learned in dharma,
and performs massive
gift-giving yajñas;

15 I want him acknowledged emperor.
Pay him homage.
You were my father's *sakhā*-friend,
so I cannot command you.
But pay him the homage freely
and joyfully."

16 "Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira is to me,"
said Bhagadattha,
"even as you are. I agree.
Son of Kuntī! What else do you wish?"

SECTION TWENTY-SEVEN

1 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna said to Bhagadatta,
"Only promise me that,
and I have nothing more to ask"
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

2 With Bhagadatta his ally,
mahā-muscled Arjuna, Kuntī's son,
moved further north, to the territories
of the lord of wealth, Dhanada-Kubera.

3 Kuntī's son, bull-brave Arjuna,
overran the small hills,
the outlying mountainous areas,
and the high peaks.

4 With all the mountain forts
and chiefs of the hills subdued,
he exacted tribute
from them.

5 But he was able to make them his allies
by peace treaties with them.
Next he attacked
Bṛhanta, rājā of Ulūka.

6 The earth shook with *mṛdaṅga*-drum-beats,
with the din of chariot wheels,
and the trumpeting
of war elephants.

7 Bṛhanta emerged from his capital,
leading his four-fold army,
and immediately gave battle
to Phālguna-Arjuna.

8 A fierce mahā-clash ensued
between Dhañanjaya-Arjuna and Bṛhanta,
but Bṛhanta was forced to retreat
against Arjuna's onslaught.

9 Realising the uselessness
of battling with Kaunteya-Arjuna,
the mountain-lord came forward
with all his wealth.

10 Arjuna made peace with him
and restored him his kingdom Ulūka;
after which he marched on Senābindu
and drove him from his land.

11 Next to be subdued were Modapura,
Vāmadeva, Sudāmāna,
Susaṁkula, the Ulūkas of the north,
and their rājās and peoples.

12 On Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira's orders,
Kirīṭīn-Arjuna annexed these five kingdoms
by moving his troops against them,
himself staying in Senābindu.

13 As soon as he entered Devaprastha,
capital of Senābindu,
Arjuna established his quarters there
with his fourfold army.

14 With the assistance of the kings he had subdued,
he attacked the even greater ruler,
the bull-brave descendant of Puru,
Viśvagaśva.

15 With all the brave rulers of the hills
under his control,
Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna succeeded in overcoming
the capital of the Puru king.

16 After vanquishing the Puru king
and the renegade hill tribes,
Pāṇḍu's son humbled the seven tribes
called the Utsavasaṁketa.

17 The bull-brave Kṣatriya Arjuna
proceeded to overrun
the Kṣatriyas of Kāśmīra.
king Lohita, and ten minor rulers.

18 Next came the Trigartas, Dārvas,
Kokanadas, and other Kṣatriyas,
who attacked
the son of Kuntī Arjuna first.

19 The Kaurava-descendant-Arjuna conquered
the enchanting city of Abhisārī;
after which he subdued Rocamāna,
who lived in Uragā.

20 Pākaśāsana-Indra's son Arjuna
then overran the lovely city
of Siṁhapura, one of Rājā Citrayudha's
heavily-fortified towns.

21 Next the bull-brave descendant of Kuru
turned his attention
on the kingdoms of Suhma and Cola,
and attacked them.

22 With a fierce assault,
Pākaśāsani-Arjuna succeeded in defeating
the difficult-to-conquer tribe
known as the Bāhlīkas.

23 Pāṇḍu's son, Pākaśāsana-Indra's son,
Phalguna-Arjuna with a special force
attacked and defeated
the Daradas and Kāmbojas.

24 Arjuna defeated all the renegade tribes
in the north-eastern borders
and also those
that lived in the forests.

25 Mahārāja Janamejaya! Pākasāśāni-Arjuna conquered
the combined forces of the Lohas,
the eastern Kāmbojas,
and the Ṛṣikas of the north.

26 The gruesome battle
between the Ṛṣikas and Pārtha-Arjuna
was like the one between the gods and anti-gods,
caused by Tārakā.

27 From the defeated Ṛṣikas, O rājā Janamejaya,
Arjuna accepted as tribute
eight horses with skin the colour
of a parrot's breast,

28 And other horses that were peacock-blue,
all swift,
all born in the northern
and neighbouring territories.

29 With the Himālayas and Niṣkuṭa mountain ranges
under his control,
bull-among-men Arjuna came
to the white mountains, and camped there.

SECTION TWENTY-EIGHT

1 Crossing the white mountains,
the brilliant hero
attacked and conquered Kimpuruṣa-land,
ruled by Drumaputra.

2 But the cost was a horrific battle
in which countless Kṣatriyas were slaughtered
before the finest-of-Pāṇḍavas Arjuna
could claim victory.

3 With single-minded purpose and a large army,
Arjuna, son of Pākaśāsana-Indra,
subdued the land of Hāṭaka,
ruled by the Guhyakas.

4 He won them over with gentle policy.
Next brave Arjuna came
to lovely Lake Mānasa,
and other sacred lakes and ponds.

5 Around Lake Mānasa, the Pāṇḍava conquered
the land of the Gandharvas –
the regions surrounding
the Hāṭaka kingdom.

6 From the Gandharvas
Arjuna took as tribute
a large number of splendid horses,
including Tittiri, Kalmāṣa, and Maṇḍūka.

7 Phālguna-Arjuna next attacked Hemakūṭa,
the glorious mountain.
From Hemakūṭa he moved
to the land of Harivarṣa,

8 Occupying it with his huge army.
It was a country
of enchanting cities, beautiful forests,
and soft-flowing rivers.

9 Its citizens were brave like gods,
its women paragons of loveliness.
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna was delighted
with the land of Harivarṣa.

10 Annexing Harivarsa, he appropriated
its large hoard of wealth.
His next target of attack
was the Niṣadha mountain.

11 He had no difficulty subduing it,
nor any with his next –
the divine Ilāvṛtavarṣa,
Jambū-island's midmost region.

12 There Dhanañjaya-Arjuna encountered
god-like marvellous mortals,
all prosperous, all happy.
Never had he seen people like these before.

13 The houses were refulgent,
the women like apsarās.
Arjuna was as fascinated by them
as they by him.

14 Arjuna overcame the opposition easily.
He exacted heavy tribute from them,
after which
he re-installed their chiefs.

15 Loaded with gifts and tributes
of gold and jewels,
Arjuna moved northwards.
There he came to mahā-Meru,

16 Many-splendoured Meru,
Lord of mountains!
Four-coloured Meru!
Inaccessible Meru!
One-hundred-thousand-yojanas tall!

17 Scintillating, heart-enchanting
Gem-glittering lord of mountains!
Golden-sun-drenched Meru!
God-and-gandharva-haunted Meru!

18 Meru of Siddhas and Cāraṇas!
Mountain of flowers and fruits!
Incalculably tall towering Meru!
By adharma-men-unknowable Meru!

19 Meru of fearful snakes!
Of precious herbs and medicines!
Heaven-touching, heaven-surrounding mahā-Meru!
Inconceivable, incredible Meru!

20 Many-rivered Meru!
Birdsong-melodious Meru!
So lovely was the mountain
That Phālguna-Arjuna was spellbound.

21 All around Meru was Ilāvrta.
On its southern slope
was the *jambū*-tree,
perennially fruiting and flowering,
guarded zealously
by the Siddhas and Cāraṇas.

22 O rājā Janamejaya! The branches
of that *jambū*-tree reached to heaven.
The region took its name
from that marvellous tree.

23 Foe-smitting Arjuna saw this tree.
Uuparalleled in the world
are Meru and Jambū.
Delight flooded Savyasācī-Arjuna's heart.

24 From the Siddhas and Cāraṇas
on the slopes of Meru,
Jiṣṇu-Arjuna collected gems, rich robes,
ornaments and other wealth.

25 With these expensive gifts
for his brother's mahā-yajña,
Arjuna prepared to take leave
of this celestial region.

26 Keeping Meru on his right,
Arjuna came to the banks of Jambū river,
and feasted his eyes
on its lovely waters.

27 Golden-plumaged birds flew past him.
Golden lotuses bloomed in its waters,
golden was its mud,
golden its spray and sand.

28 Golden flowers everywhere!
Lilies and blue lotuses!
And everywhere on its banks,
golden-hued shady trees!

29 Golden steps led to its waters –
steps studded with exquisite mosaic –
floating in the air,
song and dance-music.

30 On both its banks
elegant canopies could be seen,
whose tapestries gave more lustre
to the river's beauty.
O Indra-among-rājās Janamejaya!
Arjuna was grateful to see such loveliness.

31 God-like men sported with their wives
on the banks.
They fed on the river's waters.
They wore intricate jewels,
they spent their lives happily
living in Jambū.

32 From them too Arjuna collected
varied jewels and gems.
With the gold of the Jambū river
and with teeming wealth,
Pārtha-Arjuna continued his career of conquests
westwards.

33 He came to the lands of the Nāgas
and conquered them.
Going still further west, O mahārāja,
Pākaśāsani-Arjuna came to Gandhamādana.

34 He subdued the dwellers
on that fabled mountain.
And carrying the wealth they gave him, O rājā,
he went to Ketumāla,

35 A land of divine men
and ravishing women.
Arjuna brought it under his control,
and exacted tribute.

36 From them he obtained
countless jewels and ornaments,
and returned to Ilāvṛta,
the midmost point.

37 Ambidextrous Savyasācī Arjuna
next moved eastwards.
Near Meru and Mandara,
beside the river Śailodā,

38 Lived a people under the shades
of the *kīcaka* and *veṇu* trees;
there were many tribes,
named Khaśa, Jhaśa,
Nadyota, Praghasa, Dīrghaveṇi, Paśupa,
Kulinda, Taṅgana, Parataṅgana.

39 Arjuna defeated them all,
collected fabulous gems
as tribute from them,
and went to Mālyavān mountain.

40 Conquering Mālyavān,
the invincible hero of the Pāṇḍavas
went to the land of Bhadrāśva,
beautiful as heaven itself.

41 A land of gods and goddesses!
The son of Pāṇḍu
defeated and conquered them,
and exacted tribute.

42 With all manner of wealth in his hands,
Arjuna next went
to the Nīlagiris,
and defeated their inhabitants.

43 With the blue hills overpowered,
Arjuna turned to Ramyaka, peopled
with handsome men and bewitching women;
he defeated them.

44 Next was the turn of the regions
protected by the Guhyakas;
he found golden deer and birds in this region,
and appropriated them
for the sake of the massive yajña
that was planned.

45 Mahā-powerful Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
went to the lands
protected by gandharvas,
and brought them in his power.

46 Fabulous treasures of gems
were heaped on him.
He turned to the White Mountains,
and conquered their people;
after which he went
to the region called Hiraṇyaka.

47 He lost himself in the entrancing beauty
of that place.
Wandering among the palaces there,
he looked like the full moon.

48 And when Arjuna strolled
in the magnificent streets, O Indra-among-rājās,
lovely ladies looked down on him
from the high buildings.

49 Parthā-Arjuna was the enchancer
of his family glory,
resplendent in his dress and ornaments, and crown,
brave, enterprising, loyal.

50 Ear-rings flashed around his face,
his armour dazzled;
his loins were girded for battle,
and he

51 Sported every kind of weapon.
He was patient, handsome,
like Śakra-Indra a valiant enemy-crusher
and defender-against-attacks.
Seeing him, the ladies felt
Śaktipāṇī-Kartikeya had come on earth.

52 They whispered among themselves,
"This is a tiger among men!
Who can even dare face him
on the battlefield?"

53 They whispered and looked lovingly
at Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
flattering him with high praise,
and showering flower-petals on his head.

54 And the other citizens stared curiously
at Pāṇḍava-Arjuna,
and some flung rubies and other precious stones
towards him.

55 Arjuna succeeded in conquering them all,
and he took
their gems, gold and ornaments
Then he attacked Śṛṅgavān.

56 From there Kuntī's son Phālguna-Arjuna
went to north Kuruvarṣa
with the idea of subduing
the people of that land.

57 Some mahā-bodied mahā-valiant, mahā-powerful
frontier-guards stopped him,
facing him fearlessly,
and confidently warned him:

58 "Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
you cannot overwhelm us.
It is good if you go back!
You have conquered enough.

59 Any human entering our land dies.
We have watched your conquests
with much satisfaction.
Enough is enough, Arjuna!

60 There is nothing here for you,
nothing to add to your list.
This is the land of the northern Kurus,
who do not want war.

61 Kuntī's son, even if you enter our land,
you'll see nothing.
Human eyes are useless here,
mortal vision will not do.

62 If there is anything else you want,
tell us, O tiger-among-men,
O descendant of Bharata.
We will do what we can."

63 Arjuna smiled and said to them:
"I want Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
acknowledged as supreme emperor
through the Rājasūya.

64 If your country is closed to humans,
I will not enter it.
But I will expect tribute-offerings
for Yudhiṣṭhira."

65 They presented as tribute
exquisite cloths and ornaments,
celestial silks
and marvellous skins.

66 In this way Arjuna established hegemony
over all the northern territories,
defeating both Kṣatriyas
and savage tribes.

67 In this way, after a series
of conquests,
Arjuna was able to collect hoards
of expensive tribute – gems,

68 Swift horses of the Tittiri
and Kalmāṣa breeds,
and other horses with skins
the colour of peacocks.

69 Then, O rājā Janamejaya,
followed by his army of fourfold divisions,
Arjuna returned triumphant
to Śakraprastha-Indraprastha.

70 He went straight to Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira
and offered him the wealth and the animals.
Then, on Yudhiṣṭhira's orders,
he rested.

SECTION TWENTY-NINE

1 With Yudhiṣṭhira's permission,
valiant Bhīma in the meantime
(Vaiśampāyana continued)
began his eastern campaign.

2 O tiger of the Bharatas, Janamejaya!
Greatest of valiant heroes,
cause-of-sorrow-to-enemies,
Bhīma marched with an army

3 Consisting of elephants,
horses, and chariots –
an army designed to annihilate opposition –
to subdue Pāñcāla.

4 Bull-brave Bhīma won the Pāñcālas over
by skilful diplomacy.
Soon he was able to defeat
the Gaṇḍakas and Videhas.

5 Then he subjugated the Daśārṇas
The Daśārṇa rājā Sudharma
fought a horripilating duel
with Bhīma – without weapons.

6 So impressed was Bhīma
with mahā-ātmaned Sudharma's ingenuity
that he appointed the mahā-powerful Daśārṇa
as his army's general.

7 O rājā! The earth trembled
when Bhīma's army marched.
Steadily, Bhīma continued
his eastern progress.

8 One of his greatest victories
was the defeat
of the king of Aśvamedha, Rocamāna,
whose troops were routed.

9 With the defeat of Rocamāna,
which called for many stupendous feats,
mahā-valiant Bhīma succeeded
in controlling the east.

10 He moved southward to Sukumāra,
the capital of the Pulindas,
and vanquished
its king Sumitra.

11 Then, O Janamejaya, he received instructions
from Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
that he should launch an attack
against mahā-valiant Śiśupāla.

12 Mahārāja! When the rājā of Cedi, Śiśupāla,
learnt of Bhīma's plans,
he emerged from his palace
and welcomed Bhīma respectfully.

13 Mahārāja! The two great heroes
of the Kuru and Cedi races
greeted each other cordially
and wished each other well.

14 The Cedi rājā Śiśupāla offered his kingdom
to Bhīma and, smiling, said:
"Defectless one,
what is it that you plan against me?"

15 Bhīma told him everything
about Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira.
King Śiśupāla did exactly
what Bhīma asked him.

16 Then O rājā Janamejaya! Śiśupāla entertained
Bhīma lavishly for thirty days,
after which the Pāṇḍava set out
from Cedi with his army.

SECTION THIRTY

1 The great foe-smiter Bhīma defeated
  king Śreṇimān of the Kumāra territory,
and Bṛhadbala
  of the Kosala kingdom.

2 Next to be vanquished by Bhīma
  was mahā-powerful Dīrghayajña,
the great dharma-following king of Ayodhyā.
  Much skill was needed here.

3 Next were the northern Kosalas
  and the Gopālakakṣa kingdom,
after which lord-of-men Bhīma
  overcame the king of Malla.

4 Heroic Bhīma came to the humid foothills
  of Himavant,
and soon extended his sway
  over that whole region.

5 In this way numberless kingdoms
  fell to bull-brave Bhīma
He overran Śuktimān mountain
  and the Bhallāṭa kingdom.

6 Most powerful of powerful men,
  enormously powerful Bhīma
next defeated Subāhu,
  the never-defeated rājā of Kāśi.

7 Subāhu vanquished,
  Bhīma attacked and humbled Kratha,
ruler of a kingdom
  adjoining that of Supārśva.

8 The Matsyas and the mahā-powerful Maladas
  were next,
including all the lands
  known as Paśūbhumi,

9 Which had never seen any form
of fear and oppression.
From there, mahā-muscled Bhīma defeated
Madadhāra and Mahīdhara,

10 And the Somadheyas.
Moving north, Kuntī's son Bhīma
assaulted and overran
the country called Vatsa.

11 He defeated the king of the Bhargas,
the king of the Niṣadas
and many others,
led by Maṇimān.

12 It took him hardly an effort
to crush the Mallas
of the southern region
and overrun Bhogavanta hill.

13 He conciliated the Śarmakas
and Varmakas.
As for the lord of the world, Janaka,
rājā of Videha –

14 Tiger-among-men Bhīma had no trouble
subduing him.
With trickery he outwitted the Śukas
and the barbarian tribes.

15 Kuntī's son, Pāṇḍava Bhīma
attacked from Videha
and defeated the seven Kirāta kings
living near Indra mountain.

16 Inexhaustibly energetic,
the son of Kuntī
then subjugated the Suhmas and the Prasuhmas;
then Magadha;

17 And won as his allies
Daṇḍa and Daṇḍhara.
Assisted by other defeated kings,
Bhīma attacked Girivraja.

18 He persuaded Jarāsaṁdha's son Sahadeva
to pay tribute and,
with a force of vanquished kings,
attacked Karṇa.

19 His fourfold army divisions
shook the earth.
The great Pāṇḍava fought a fierce battle
with Karṇa.

20 Karṇa was defeated and subdued,
and Bhīma
turned his attention
to the rājās of the mountains.

21 In a dreadful battle,
strong-armed Bhīma
killed the powerful ruler
of Modāgiri.

22 Next to succumb
was mahā-powerful Vāsudeva,
rājā of Puṇḍra,
and Mahaujas of Kauśikakaceha.

23 O mahāraja Janamejaya!
With both these kings under his control,
Bhīma decided to attack
the rājā of Baṅga,

24 He vanquished Samudrasena
and Candrasena of Tāmralipta,
and the ruler
of Karvaṭa,

25 The chief of the Suhmas,
and those who dwelt on the sea-coast;
after which bull-brave Bhīma
defeated the Mlecchas.

26 With all these territories in his power,
Bhīma exacted heavy tribute,
and turned next
to Lauhitya.

27 The son of Pāṇḍu Bhīma took tribute
in the form of gems and ornaments
from the Mlecchas
who lived on the sea-coast.

28 He took a mahā-wealth of sandalwood, aloes,
expensive clothing,
pearls and precious stones, gold,
silver and coral.

29 They showered
on the mahā-ātmaned son of Kuntī
a veritable downpower of crores
of gems and coins.

30 Returning to Indraprastha,
fearlessly-brave Bhīma
placed all these before Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
as his gift-offering.

SECTION THIRTY-ONE

1 O rājā Janamejaya! Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
affectionately instructed Sahadeva,
who set out with a huge army
towards the south.

2 Powerful as a Kuru, and powerful
in his own right,
Sahadeva defeated the Śūrasenas,
and then the Matsyas.

3 Next he vanquished the mahā-powerful rājā
of the Adhirājas, Dantavakra,
and re-installed him
after payment of tribute.

4 Sukumāra and Sumitra
were next subdued,
then the remaining Matsyas,
and later the Paṭṭacaras.

5 Sahadeva overran the kingdom
of the Niṣādas,
the magnificent hill called Gośṛṅga,
and Śreṇimān's kingdom.

6 The kingdom of Nararāṣṭra annexed,
he attacked Kuntibhoja.
The king of Kuntibhoja was only too willing
to surrender.

7 On the banks of the Carmaṇvatī,
he clashed with the son of king Jambhaka,
whom Vāsudeva-Krishna
had earlier defeated.

8 O great Bharata Janamejaya,
Jambhaka fought with brilliant valour,
but Sahadeva defeated him,
and resumed his southern campaign.

9 Immeasurably mahā-powerful Sahadeva
routed the Sekas and related tribes,
and forced them to pay enormous heaps
of jewels as tribute.

10 Crossing the Narmadā, the Aśvins' son Sahadeva
crushed in battle
the two heroic kings of Avantī,
Vinda and Anuvinda,

11 Who commanded a gigantic army.
He collected
enormous tribute from them
and marched on Bhojakaṭa.

12 O unfadingly-glorious rājā Janamejaya!
A furious battle raged there
for two days. Finally,
the son of Madri
succeeded in routing
the fierce warrior-king Bhīṣmaka.

13 Next to suffer defeat
were the king of Kosala,
the king of Kāntāraka,
and the king of Veṇataṭa.

14 The Nāṭakeyas and Herambakas
suffered the same fate,
together with the Mārudhas
and the Ramyagrāmas;

15 The Nacinas, Arbukas,
and other forest tribes;
after which, Sahadeva defeated
the mahā-powerful king Vātādhipa.

16 Defeating the Pulindas,
he pressed further south; there,
Nakula's younger brother fought a full day
with rājā Pāṇḍya.

17 Routing Pāṇḍya, the mahā-muscled hero
moved further south,
until he reached the world-famous caves
of Kiṣkindhā.

18 Here he battled for seven days
with the Vānara chiefs
Mainda and Dvivida,
who fought tirelessly.

19 Pleased with mahā-ātmaned Sahadeva,
the two Vānara chiefs
spoke affectionately to him
the following words:

20 "Tiger of the Pāṇḍavas,
we will give you jewels.
Go back with them. May Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira
achieve his desires."

21 Taking their tribute-wealth,
Sahadeva marched
on the city of Māhiṣmati,
where the bull-brave hero fought rājā Nīla.

22 It was a horrendous battle
that took place between
the mighty Pāṇḍava Sahadeva
and rājā Nīla.

23 Many soldiers perished,
and even Sahadeva was in danger,
for the god of fire-sacrifices, Bhagavān Havyavāhana,
was on Nīla's side.

24 It looked for a while
that the chariots, horses,
elephants and armoured soldiers
of Sahadeva's army were on fire.

25 Sahadeva was at a loss
and did not know what to do.
The brave hero, O Janamejaya,
was completely bewildered.

26 “Why did the Bhagavān of fire-sacrifices
turn hostile to Sahadeva?”
asked Janamejaya.
“Isn’t it true, O Brahmin,
that Sahadeva was on a mission
involving a fire-sacrifice?”

27 From what I have heard
(Vaiśampāyana replied),
Bhagavān Havyavāhana, while staying
in the city of Māhiṣmatī,
managed to get himself involved
in adultery.

28 Rājā Nīla’s daughter was a ravishing beauty.
She would often
sit near her father’s *agnihotṛ*-sacrifice,
feeding the flames.

29 The fire refused to blaze up
till the sweet lips
of the lovely girl blew gently
into it.

30 Word went round in rājā Nīla’s palace
and other houses
that Bhagavān Agni wanted the girl.
And Sudarśanā was agreeable.

31 One day Agni, disguised as a Brahmin,
visited her
and was enjoying the lovely-hipped lotus-eyed girl
when the dharma-following rājā surprised them,
and ordered the Brahmin punished,
as enjoined in the śāstras.

32 Agni-Bhagavān Havyavāhana
flamed up in anger,
Astonished, the rājā prostrated himself
before the Brahmin.

33 Bending his head low,
the king bestowed his daughter on Agni,
who had come disguised
as a twice-born.

34 Bhagavān Agni was pleased
to accept
the lovely-eye-browed daughter of Nīla,
and granted him favours.

35 Agni, satisfier-of-desires,
granted the king a boon –
that his army would never panic
on the battlefield.

36 That is why, O rājā Janamejaya,
the army of anyone
desiring to overpower king Nīla
got reduced to ashes.

37 From that day, O Kaurava Janamejaya,
the girls of Māhiṣmatī
were considered unacceptable
for arranged marriages.

38 Agni gave them this boon:
They chose
their own husbands,
and were free
to experiment sexually
before and after marriage.

39 O bull-brave Bharata mahārāja Janamejaya!
That is why all the famous rājās,
fearing fire, avoided that city
from that day.

40 But dharmātmā Sahadeva, seeing the flames
surround and consume his army,
stood still as a mountain. He touched water,
purifying himself, and said to Pāvaka-Agni:

41 "O Pāvaka!
Kṛṣṇavartman!
O god
Who leaves a trail of black smoke!
Take my homage! *Namo'astu te*!
You are the mouth of the gods!
You are Yajña itself!

42

Because you purify
everything,
You are Pāvaka
the Purifier.
Because you drink
the libations,
You are Havya-vāhana,
Bearer of Offerings.
All the Vedas proceed
from you,
And so you are called
Jātaveda.

43

O Vibhāvasu!
You are Sureśa,
lord of the gods.
You are Citrabhānu,
and Anala.
You are Svarga-dvāra,
the Door to Heaven.
You are Hutāśana,
Eater of oblations.
You are Jvalana,
the Fiery One.
You are Śikhī
the Embracer.

44

O Bhagavān!
You are Vaiṣvānara,
and Piṅgeśa.
You are Plavaṅga,
and Bhūriteyas.
You are the cause
of Kārtikeya's birth.
You are Rudragarbha,
and Hiraṇyakṛt, the Golden-Created.

45 O Agni,
give me strength, give me valour!
O Vāyu,
give me life, give me *prāṇa*!
Earth,
give me food!
Water,
bless me.

46 Mother of waters! Apāṁgarbha!
Purest of the pure! Mahā-sattva!
Origin of the Vedas! Jātaveda!
Lord of the gods! Sureśvara!
Feed me with truth,
O mouth of the gods!

47 Ṛṣis and Brahmins,
Gods and anti-gods,
Feed you daily
With holy rituals.
As the ritual glows,
May your truth glow in me!
Purify me!

48 Smoke-bannered deity!
Lord of flames!
Wind-born deity!
Omnipresent Agni!
I beg of you, Agni, destroyer of defects,
Cleans me with your truth!

49 Noblest of all! O Bhagavan Agni!
Purified by you, I sing these praises.
Grant me joy,
Grant me health,
Grant me wisdom,
Grant me love. Grant me peace."

50 Whoever offers libations to Agni
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
with these mantras on his lips,
is blessed with success.
His senses are under control,
he is freed from all defects.

51 Sahadeva said, "O Agni, Havyavāhana,
bearer of holy libations,
do not obstruct me."
He scattered kuśa grass on the ground.

52 And, in front of his frightened troops,
that tiger-among-men sat down
on the grass, expecting the terrible conflagration
any moment.

53 Like the ocean that does not engulf
the shore,
Agni stopped before Sahadeva.
Approaching slowly, he said

54 To superhuman Sahadeva
these consoling words:
"Rise, scion of Kuru! Kuru-nandana!
I was only testing you.

55 I know what your mission is,
I know what plans
Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira has. But this city
has been promised my protection,

56 As long rājā Nīla has sons.
I will, however,
O son of Pāṇḍu,
see what I can do for you."

57 Bull-brave Bharata-Janamejaya!
Mādrī's son Sahadeva rose, reassured,
folded his palms in *prāñjali,* bowed low,
and worshipped Pāvaka-Agni.

58 Agni disappeared.
Rājā Nīla,
commanded by the fire-god,
approached Sahadeva, and,

59 With all the usual rites, paid homage
to tiger-among-men Sahadeva,
who accepted the pūjā-respect
and made him pay tribute.

60 Mādrī's son Sahadeva continued
his victorious march southwards.
He succeeded in defeating Amitaujas,
rājā of Tripura.

61 Next he humbled the might of king Pauravas,
after which mahā-muscled Sahadeva
defeated, with great effort,
ācārya Kaūsika's disciple Ākṛti,

62 King of Surāṣṭra.
Sahadeva despatched an envoy
to the illustrious king Rukmin
Bhīṣmaka,

63 Who ruled the territories of Bhojakaṭa.
Rukmin Bhīṣmaka
was a mahā-intelligent dharmātmā
and a *sakhā*-friend of Indra.

64 Recalling his friendship with Vāsudeva-Krishna,
king Rukmin brought his son
and gladly accepted
Sahadeva's overlordship.

65 Sahadeva obtained large hoards
of jewels and gold
from Rukmin, and attacked next
Śūrparaka and Tālākaṭa.

66 Then he subdued king Daṇḍaka,
a mahā-powerful ruler.
The Mleccha tribes and sea-island dwellers
came next,

67 Followed by Niṣādas,
the cannibal Rākṣasas,
the massive-eared Karṇaprāvaraṇas
and the Kālamukhas,
who were the offspring
of human beings and Rākṣasas.

68 He conquered the Kola hills,
Surabhipattana,
the copper-rich Tāmra islands,
and the Rāmaka mountain.

69 Intelligent Sahadeva routed king Timiṅgila,
after which he attacked
and vanquished the one-legged people,
the Keralas.

70 Next he annexed the city of Saṁjayantī,
the Pakhaṇḍa
and Karahāṭaka kingdoms
by skilful diplomacy.

71 Others who paid him tribute
were the Pāṇḍyas, Draviḍas,
Uṇḍras, Keralas, Andhras, Tālavanas,
Uṣṭrakarṇikas, and Kaliṅgas.

72 The entrancing city of Āṭavi
fell to him,
and also the capital of the Yavanas,
through diplomatic means.

73 Pāṇḍu's son Sahadeva reached the ocean-shore,
and set up camp there.
He spent many days in serious consultation
with his officers.

74 O Indra-among-rājās Janamejaya!
Following their suggestion,
Madrī's son thought of his nephew,
Bhīma's son, great Ghaṭotkaca.

75 No sooner had he done so
than a mahā-bodied rākṣasa
materialised before them,
wearing splendid and expensive ornaments.

76 Cloud-dark his skin.
Gold rings glittered on his ears;
armlets of gold;
kiṅkiṇi-gemmed girdle on his waist.

77 Gold chain round his neck,
crown on his head;
long-bearded, copper-bright locks,
dark-green whiskers –
a fearful apparition! –
with gold-glittering arm-muscles.

78 He had smeared red sandalpaste
on his body;
he wore a soft, fine dress;
when he walked, the ground shook.

79 Seeing him approach, O rājā Janamejaya,
all those present nearby fled in fear,
like deer and other beasts
running from a jungle lion.

80 Ghaṭotkaca came near Sahadeva,
like Rāvana before the ṛsi Pulastya;
he touched
the feet of Śahadeva in *añjali*,

81 And said: "Order me."
Ghaṭotkaca was like Meru peak itself.
Pāṇḍu's son Sahadeva
spread wide his braceleted arms

82 And warmly embraced him,
smelling his head again and again,
and introduced him
to his ministers and officers.

83 "Child," said Sahadeva,
"go to Laṅkā and bring jewels and other wealth
for the Rājasuya from the Indra-among-rākṣasas
mahā-ātmaned Vībhīṣaṇa –

84 Wealth of all possible kinds.
As soon as you have them
in your possession,
hurry back here.

85 My son! If Vibhīṣaṇa should refuse
to pay tribute,
give him a display of your prowess,
and tell him:

86 'O younger brother of Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera!
Kunti's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
on the strength of arms of Viṣṇu-Krishna,
has commenced a massive Rājasūya yajña.

87 Understand this well.
May you prosper!
Now, give me leave to go.'
Having said this, return."

88 "That I will do," happily answered Ghaṭotkaca,
and doing *pradakṣiṇa* to Sahadeva,
he went away to the south
(continued Vaiśampāyana)

89 The foe-smiting hero, mahā-ātmaned Sahadeva,
in this way sent his message
to Vibhīṣaṇa,
grandson of Pulastya,
through Hiḍimba's son
Ghaṭotkaca.

90 Ghaṭotkaca came to the sea
separating Laṅkā,
filled with tortoises, *grāha*-reptiles,
and other sea-creatures,
and all manner of rare pearls
and expensive sea-shells.

91 He saw the bridge built by Rāma
and recalled Rāma's valour,
and *praṇāma-ing* the bridge
he moved to the south.

92 And across the sea,
Ghaṭotkaca saw the incredibly
lovely city of Laṅkā,
looking like heaven itself.

93 A walled fortress encircled it.
Exquisite gates
and portals graced
the stately red and white buildings.

94 Gold windows, with pearl filigree work inside;
other windows
had grill-work of gold
or silver or ivory.

95 The city gates and upper rooms
seemed to dazzle,
there was to much gold in them.
Everywhere *dundubhi*-kettledrums
blared festive sounds;
everywhere, green parks and groves.

96 Fragrant flowers Magnificent roads and streets.
A gem-glittering city – shaming Indra's Amarāvati.

97 Ghaṭotkaca entered the city
of the rākṣasas,
and saw trident-armed and shield-carrying soldiers
everywhere.

98 These soldiers had never lost a war.
He saw lovely women everywhere,
their bodies glittering
with divine garlands and ornaments,
beautiful dresses, beautiful neckchains.

99 Their eyes were pink with wine-drinking;
they moved about,
large-breasted and lovely-thighed;
Seeing Ghaṭotkaca,
son of Bhīma, in their midst,
they were nonplussed.

100 Ghaṭotkaca hurried
to the breathtaking beautiful palace
as magnificent as Indra's palace,
and said to the guard:

101 "Among the Kurus a mahā-powerful rājā
was born; his name was Pāṇḍu;
his youngest son
is Sahadeva.

102 Sahadeva is eager to help
his brother Yudhiṣṭhira
in his Rājasūya.
Krishna supports the Rājasūya.
And I have been sent here as special emissary
of the Kaurava king.

103 I desire audience immediately
with Pulastya's grandson Vibhīṣaṇa."
The guard hurried in
to convey the message.

104 With palms folded in *añjali*
he repeated the emissary's words.
Indra-among-rākṣasas dharmātmā Vibhīṣaṇa
immediately ordered Ghaṭotkaca shown in.

105 The guard lost no time
in hurrying back to Ghaṭotkaca
with the order of dharma-knowing
mahā-ātmaned Vibhīṣaṇa.

106 "You may enter," he said.
"The king awaits your presence."
Ghaṭotkaca entered
the palace --

107 A palace whose splendour
rivalled that of Kailāsa!
Its main door was made
of hammered sheets of gold.

108 On all sides were exquisitely –
carved doorways,
many upper rooms and windows,
all studded with gems.

109 Hammered-gold, silver,
and quartz-inlaid pillars
seduced the eye towards themselves.
Some pillars had pearls
and cat's-eyes fitted in them.
Golden flags fluttered everywhere.

110 Flower-garlands everywhere
on the golden balconies and pavilions;
and as Hiḍimbā's son Ghaṭotkaca
entered this ethereal palace,
a tambourine melody
soothed his ears.

111 The music of the vīṇā!
An accompanying song,
each syllable crystal-clear!
And hundred of soft *dundubhi*-kettledrums!

112 Ghaṭotkaca was enthralled by the sweetness.
He passed through many hallways,
escorted by the guard,
and came finally

113 To the last, seeing, from a distance,
the resplendent
mahā-ātmaned Vibhīṣaṇa
seated on a pure gold throne.

114 The throne scattered radiance
like the sun;
there were gems and pearls studded in it.
Vibhīṣaṇa looked celestial.

115 He had on a celestial garland,
a celestial robe.
He appeared to be the embodiment
of the sun and Vaiśvānara-Agni.

116 Like gods around Śatakratu-Indra,
his ministers clustered round him.
Mahā-chariot-heroes
chanted his auspicious praises.

117 Two ravishing girls
in golden dresses
fanned his head gently
with yak-tail feather-fans.

118 King of the rākṣasas Vibhīṣaṇa, seated there,
resembled Kubera or Varuna.
He seemed to radiate energy.
He was firm in dharma.

119 In his mind he recollected and hymned
the praises
of Rāma of the Ikṣvākus.
Ghaṭotkaca bowed low in *añjali*,

120 Even as mahā-valiant Citraratha does
before Indra.
Vibhīṣaṇa received him courteously,
and gently asked.

121 "The lord of the earth who wants my tribute –
what dynasty is he?
Who are his brothers?
Where is his land, his birthplace?

122 And tell me all about
why you are here,
and what this tribute is meant for.
Answer in detail."

123 Ghaṭotkaca, Hiḍimbā's son,
listened carefully
(said Vaiśampāyana)
and replied to mahā-ātmaned Vibhīṣaṇa:

124 "A mahā-powerful king named Pāṇḍu
was born in the lunar dynasty.
He had five sons,
each as valiant as Śakra-Indra,

125 The eldest of whom is called
Dharmaputra, 'Son of Dharma'.
He bears on one ill-will,
he has no enemies; he is Ajātaśatru;

126 He is Dharma's embodiment on earth.
He ruled
in Hastināpura,
on the southern banks of the Gaṅgā.

127 Then he entrusted Hastināpura
to Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and himself went to Indraprastha,
ruling happily there with his brothers.

128 Both these excellent cities lie between
the land around Indraprastha.
Yudhiṣṭhira confined himself to the land
around Śakraprastha-Indraprastha.

129 His younger brother Bhīma
    is a warrior of mahā-muscled prowess.
He is a lion in battle,
    mahā-energetic, mahā-valiant.

130 He has the strength
    of ten thousand elephants.
Younger to him is Arjuna,
    mahā-patient, noble, mahā-valiant.

131 His fame straddles the worlds.
    He is as powerful as Kārtavīrya-Arjuna,
and as enterprising
    as the sons of Sagara;

132 He knows how to handle weapons
    as Paraśurāma did,
he conquers and rules like Rāma,
    he is handsome like Śakra-Indra,
and his radiance
    equals that of Bhāskara-Sūrya.

133 The gods, Dānavas, Gandharvas,
    Piśācas, Nāgas,
rākṣasas and human beings combined
    cannot overcome Phālguna-Arjuna.

134 He burnt down the Khāṇḍava forest
    and placated Jātaveda-Agni.
He defeated Śakra-Indra and the gods
    and received divine weapons from Hutāśana-Agni.

135 Mahārāja! He obtained Vāsudeva-Krishna's sister
    Subhadrā for wife –
something even the gods
    had despaired of accomplishing.

136 O rājā! Arjuna's younger brother is Nakula,
    who is renowned
in this world to be as handsome
    as the god of love Manmatha.

137 Youngest is mahā-energetic Sahadeva.
    O rājā,
it is Sahadeva
    who has sent me here.

138 My name is Ghaṭotkaca.
I am Bhīma's brave son,
My fortune-favoured mother
is Hiḍimbā, a rākṣasī.

139 I live for the sole purpose
of serving Kuntī's sons.
The earth-ruler Yudhiṣṭhira
has won world renown.

140 He has made plans to hold
a massive Rājasūya.
He has sent his brothers to collect tribute
from the four quarters.

141 With the help of the Vṛṣṇi hero, Krishna,
he has done this.
Arjuna has already subdued
the kings of the North.

142 He covered a hundred thousand yojanas
in his conquests.
Some kings he defeated,
others he killed in battle.

143 He reached heaven itself
and gathered countless treasures as tribute.
He also acquired
many marvellous horses.

144 And all this varied wealth, O rājā,
he placed before Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira.
Bhīma was entrusted with the task
of conquering the East.

145 He subdued the Eastern rulers
and brought their wealth
before Yudhiṣṭhira.
Nakula was sent to the West.

146 Sahadeva went South;
and I have been sent to you
as his messenger. This is all
that I have to tell you.
Consider what the Rajasuya
means to Yudhiṣṭhira,

147 O Indra-among-rājās, and consider also
that Hari-Krishna is on his side.
With this in mind, O king wise in dharma,
give me your tribute."

148 Dharmātmā Vibhīṣaṇa heard these words
of Ghaṭotkaca,
and both he and his ministers
were pleased.

149 With great affection and sincerity,
Vibhīṣaṇa offered tribute.
To him Ghaṭotkaca
was like Kāla's own messenger.

150 He sent magnificent woollen spreads
for elephant palanquins,
ivory, and gold-threaded beds
studded with gems.

151 Even more : a whole treasure
of the most unbelievable

152 Precious stones,
beautiful household utensils,
and thousands of rare,
hand-carved drinking goblets.

153 Still more; silver utensils
intricately crafted;
and a variety of war weapons
studded with pearls and rubies.

154 Also, fourteen palmyra trees
to be planted at the palace gates:
gold-inlaid flowers:
gem-encrusted palanquins;

155 Fabulously expensive coronets,
gold armlets and armour,
and moon-white conch-shells
of mellifluous sound;

156 Sandalwood and aloe-wood,
all varieties of precious gems,
woollen clothes, fine robes,
and other gifts –
all these and still more
rājā Vibhīṣaṇa gave to Ghaṭotkaca,

157 Who folded his palms
in respectful *añjali*;
accepted the tribute from the rājā,
and left the island.

158 Eightysix night-ranging rākṣasas, O rājā Janamejaya,
were needed to carry the treasure;
they accompanied
Hiḍimbā's son Ghaṭotkaca.

159 In this way Ghaṭotkaca
was able to bring
with him from Laṅkā the lavish gifts
that Vibhīṣaṇa gave.

160 When he arrived at the island's border,
he leapt mightily
across the ocean
and stood in front of Sahadeva.

161 Sahadeva saw him arrive,
loaded with tribute-offerings
carried by the troop
of rākṣasas.

162 When Sahadeva's soldiers saw
the fearful rākṣasas,
they scattered in terror;
Ghaṭotkaca folded his palms in *añjali*.

163 Sahadeva was delighted
with the enormous treasure of gems.
He embraced Ghaṭotkaca
and welcomed the rākṣasas.

164 He bid farewell to his soldiers,
and prepared to return.
Putting everything in order,
intelligent. Sahadeva returned to Indraprastha.

165 When Sahadeva, with all the night-ranging
rākṣasas bearing the wealth,
entered Indraprastha,
the earth seemed to tremble.

166 He did *añjali* before Yudhiṣṭhira,
and stood meekly
before his brother.
Yudhiṣṭhira praised him profusely.

167 Seeing the fabulous tribute
brought from Laṅkā,
even rājā Yudhiṣṭhira was stupefied –
and elated.

168 It was worth more
than a hundred crores –
all that wealth –
all the gold and jewels, the cattle,

169 Goats, buffaloes. Sahadeva put them all
at mahā-ātmaned Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira's
disposal, and, happy with his success,
retired to his room.

SECTION THIRTY-TWO

1 Now let me describe to you
the way in which Nakula
conquered the lands that once had been
Vāsudeva-Krishna's conquests.

2 Intelligent Nakula,
with an enormous army,
set out from Khāṇḍavaprastha
and steadily moved westward.

3 The lion-roars of his soldiers
and the terrifying din
of his chariot-wheels
made the earth shake.

4 First he attacked the hill regions
of Rohitaka,
so dear to Kārtikeya, so lovely,
prosperous, cattle-filled.

5 It was a tremendous battle
between him and Mattamayūra.
Then he moved into the desert
called the Marubhūmi;

6 Then into vastly-rich Sarisaka,
then into Mahottha.
Here he fought a fierce engagement
with the rājā-ṛṣi Ākrośa.

7 Having subdued the Dāśārṇas,
Nakula routed the Śibis,
Trigartas, Ambaṣṭhas, Mālavas,
the five Karpaṭa tribes, and

8 The Mādhyamikas and Vāṭadhānas,
both of them known
as the twice-born tribes.
Then he retraced his steps to Puskarāraṇya,

9 And the bull-brave hero defeated the tribes
known as the Utsavasaṁketas,
and the mahā-powerful Gramaṇiyas
who lived along the sea-coast,

10 The Śūdras and the Abhiras
who lived beside the Sarasvatī river,
and all the other tribes
who lived by fishing or on the mountains.

11 Then he attacked the land
of the five rivers,
the Amara hills, Uttarajyotiṣa,
and the city called Divyakaṭa;

12 Also the city of Dvārapāla.
He subdued the Rāmaṭhas,
the Hāras, Hunas,
and all other rulers of the West.

13 With the entire area in his control,
Pāṇḍava Nakula
despatched messengers to Vāsudeva-Krishna
with the news.

14 O rājā! Krishna and the Yādavas
happily accepted Nakula's suzerainty.
From here Nakula went to Sākala,
city of the Madrās.

15 He made his maternal uncle Śalya
cheerfully pay tribute;
in fact, Salya entertained his nephew lavishly,
as he deserved.

16 Nakula, skilled in warcraft,
left with a large treasure
of gold and gems.
He conquered the feared Mlecchas

17 Of the gulf, the Barbaras,
the Pahlavāns,
the Kirātas, the Yavanas,
and the Śakas.
He succeeded in collecting heavy tribute
from all of them.

18 Then, O mahārāja Janamejaya, the Kuru hero
returned, bringing with him with great difficulty
ten thousand camels loaded
with the mahā-tribute-offerings.

19 Arriving in Indraprastha,
Mādrī's son Nakula
placed everything at the disposal
of Śrīmān Yudhiṣṭhira.

20 In this way, O bull-brave Janamejaya,
Nakula subjugated
the western territories protected by Varuna
and controlled by Vāsudeva-Krishna.

SECTION THIRTY-THREE

1 Conquering the entire world,
according to their sva-dharma,
the five Pāṇḍava brothers
ruled unchallenged.

2 Yudhiṣṭhira, with the help of Bhīma
and the other brothers,
attended to the needs
of all the castes.

3 Yudhiṣṭhira put no obstacles
in anyone's way.
His words were: "Keep all contented,
give prosperity to all.

4 Bless us, O Dharma."
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira said nothing else.
And all the world's people looked to him
as to a father.

5 Because he had no enemies,
he was known as
Ajātaśatru, the-One-without-a-Foe.
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira devoted himself

6 To the welfare of his subjects.
Protection, and the preservation
of law and order was the concern
of Yudhiṣṭhira.

7 Taxes were just, authority dharma-based
and incorruptible –
with the result that the clouds brought rain,
the land prospered.

8 Because the rājā was honest,
all activities in the kingdom –
cattle-rearing, agriculture, and trade –
flourished.

9 O rājā, it was incredible:
even professional cheats and thieves,
even the king's special favourites,
did not lie.

10 In the reign of lord-of-dharma Yudhiṣṭhira,
there were no epidemics,
floods, droughts,
arson, or premature deaths.

11 And kings would come to him
to pay homage or to serve him.
They did not come
for any other purpose.

12 So brimming with dharma-laden wealth
wạs the official treasury
that it could not be spent
even in a hundred years.

13 Kuntī's son Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira assessed his wealth
and his other possessions,
and set his mind
on the Rājāsūya.

14 His friends and relatives,
singly and together,
advised him, "The time is ripe
for the great yajña."

15 And even as they were giving him
this advice,
there arrived Hari, the ṛṣi of the ages,
the ātman of the Vedas,

16 The foremost of living creatures,
the essence of what was,
what is, and what will be, Keśava,
Keśīsūdana, slayer-of-Keśī,

17 The strength of the Vṛṣṇis,
the dispeller of fears,
the scourge of his foes.
He arrived with a large army,

18 Which he stationed outside the city gates
under the command of his father
Anakadundubhi-Vasudeva;
tiger-among-men Mādhava-Krishna
brought great wealth
for Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira.

19 An ocean of wealth –
it could not even be counted!
The deafening roar of chariot wheels
announced his arrival.

20 The inexhaustible store of wealth
of the Pāṇḍavas
was further increased by Krishna's offering.
When he came,

21 Indraprastha radiated joy;
it was like the sun
shining in a sunless region,
like the breeze blowing in a void.

22 Yudhiṣṭhira hurried to meet him,
and respectfully
greeted him inside.
When Krishna had sat down,

23 Yudhiṣṭhira, in the presence of the *ṛtviks*,
led by Dhaumya
Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa, Bhīma, Arjuna,
and the twins, said

24 "Krishna!
Because you were on my side,
O great Vṛṣṇi, because you favoured me,
All this wealth is now mine.

25 O Mādhava,
Son of Devakī, Devakī-suta,
I will offer all this wealth
To the Brahmins
And to Havyavāhana-Agni, bearer of libations,
Following the custom.

26 O mahā-muscled Dāśārha,
I seek your permission
To hold the Rājasūya,
With you and my brothers at my side.

27 O Govinda, Krishna,
O hero of the Dāśārhas,
Be present at the ceremonies.
If you are present
I will be cleansed of all defects.

28 O Krishna,
Grant me permission to do this
Along with my younger brothers.
With your blessings,
The fruits of the yajña will be mine."

29 Krishna praised Yudhiṣṭhira
and said: "Tiger-among-rājās,
your deserve the title of emperor.
Proceed with the mahā-yajña Rājasūya.

30 If you are successful with it,
we will all share your glory.
I have your welfare at heart:
perform the Rājasūya.
Whatever help you need, tell me –
I will gladly give it."

31 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"O Krishna, O Hṛṣīkeśa,
your presence here is enough.
Success is bound to be mine."

32 Instructed by Krishna,
Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers
made elaborate preparations
for the Rājasūya sacrifice.

33 Pāṇḍu's son, the foe-smiter
Yudhiṣṭhira summoned
the great warrior Sahadeva
and all his ministers, and said:

34 "Let arrangements be made
to have special officers collect
the auspicious materials needed
by Brahmins for the yajña;

35 Whatever our purohita Dhaumya says
is essential – all things
should be procured systematically,
one by one.

36 If Indrasena, Viśoka and Arjuna's charioteer Pūru
wish to please me,
then let them start
collecting foodstuffs immediately.

37 See that whatever they procure
is pleasant to taste,
and sweet-smelling –
everything must delight our Brahmins."

38 Hardly had Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira finished
than the greatest of warriors Sahadeva
assured him that the work
was as good as done.

39 Then island-born Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa selected
the ṛtviks, all of them
mahā-fortune-favoured,
all like the Vedas themselves personified.

40 Satyavatī's son Vyāsa
was himself the Brahmā
of the yajña, and Susāmā
of the Dhanañjaya family
was chosen to be the chanter
of the Sāma-Veda.

41 Brahma-learned Yajñavalkya
was the *adhvaryu* priest;
Vasu's son Paila, and Dhaumya,
were the *hotās.*

42 O bull-brave Bharata Janamejaya!
The Veda-and-Vedāṅga-learned sons and disciples
of these men were given
the tasks of *hotragas.*

43 Chanting the opening blessings,
and naming the yajña's purpose,
they sanctified the site
selected for the ceremony.

44 As instructed by the Brahmins,
the architects and artisans
busily constructed large, scented houses
like temples of the gods.

45 Finest of kings and bull-brave
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
instructed his minister named Sahadeva
as follows:

46 "Send messengers with invitations to all."
Immediately,
Sahadeva had messengers despatched
to invite Brahmins, Kṣatriya

47 Landowners, Vaiśyas,
and all respectable Śūdras:
"You are invited to the great yajña
of Yudhiṣṭhira"

48 The messengers wasted no time
carrying out the order
of the Pāṇḍavas; among the invited
were both friends and strangers.

49 At the auspicious time,
O Bharata Janamejaya, the Brahmins
did the *dīkṣā* of Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
at the Rājasūya yajña.

50 After Dharmātmā Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
was honoured by the *dīkṣā*,
he approached the yajna-enclosure
in the company of hundreds of Brahmins,

51 His brothers, relatives, friends
and ministers, and those
finest of Kṣatriyas who had come
from various countries.
Finest-of-men Yudhiṣṭhira
looked like Dharma personified.

52 Also there were advisers,
and a host of Brahmins,
all expert in the Vedas and Vedāṅgas,
who had come

53 From many distant lands.
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
gave express orders that quarters
be provided for them,

54 And for their attendants.
This was done by thousands
of skilled architects. Lovely robes
and delicious meals were provided.

55 Honoured in this way by the king,
the Brahmins stayed there,
conversing on varied subjects,
and enjoying the entertainments.

56 And all that could be heard continuously
was the clamour
of mahā-ātmaned Brahmins consuming food
and endlessly discussing.

57 "Here!" "Some more here!"
"Eat!" "Eat!" –
these were the only words
heard for days on end.

58 O Bharata descendant Janamejaya,
to each Brahmin, Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
gave thousands of cows, beds,
gold coins and virgins.

59 Mahā-ātmaned Yudhiṣṭhira's yajña
was like the yajña
Śakra-Indra performed in heaven –
the yajña of an incomparable hero.

60 And bull-brave rājā Yudhiṣṭhira sent
the Pāṇḍava Nakula
to Hastināpura to bring
Bhīṣma,

61 Droṇa, Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Vidura, Kṛpa,
and all his relatives who still
had affection for him.

SECTION THIRTY-FOUR

1 Victorious-in-battle Nakula hurried to Hastināpura
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and formally invited Bhīṣma
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

2 Pleased with the invitation,
the Kaurava elders, led by the ācārya,
with Brahmins following,
came to the yajña.

3 O bull-brave Bharata descendant Janamejaya!
Hundreds of others,
hearing of Yudhiṣṭhira's yajña,
happily flocked there.

4 Many came from distant lands
to catch a glimpse
of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira and his famed sabhā.
They brought

5 With them expensive gifts –
gold and jewels.
Vidura of maha-intelligence;
Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Bhīṣma,

6 Duryodhana and all his brothers,
the rājā of Gāndhāra Subala, mahā-muscled Śakuni;

7 Acala, Vṛṣaka, best-among-chariot-heroes Karṇa,
brave Śalya, mahā-powerful Bāhlika;

8 Somadatta, the Kuru Bhūri, Bhūriśravas, Śala,
Aśvatthāman, Kṛpa, Droṇa, Jayadratha the
Sindhu king;

9 Yakṣasena and his sons, lord-of-the-earth Śāla,
Bhagadatta, Prāgjyotiṣa's mahā-chariot-hero;

10 All the Mlecchas of the sea-coast,
the hill rājās, and rājā Bṛhadbala;

11 Vāsudeva, king of the Pauṇḍras, the Baṅga and
Kaliṅga kings,
Ākarṣa, Kuntala, Mālava, Āndhra,

12 The rājās of Drāviḍa, Siṁhala and Kāśmīra;
the mahā-radiant king Kuntibhoja, king Gauravāhana:

13 The second Bāhlika, and other valiant rājās,
Virāṭa and his two sons, the mahā-powerful Māvella:

14 Also many other rājās and sons of rājās,
including the mahā-valiant Śiśupāla and his son –

15 All of them came to the great yajña.
Balarāma, Aniruddha, Kaṅka, Sāraṇa,

16 Gada, Pradyumna, Sāmba, heroic Cārudeṣṇa,
Ulmuka, Niśaṭha, brave Aṅgāvaha,

17 And many other Vṛṣṇis – all mahā-chariot heroes –
came also. And from the central territories.

18 Came other illustrious rājās. Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
had ordered residences to be erected for all.

19 Swimming and bathing pools,
tall trees, luscious food
filled these houses. Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
offered pūjā-respect to the mahā-ātmaned guests,

20 And they retired to their mansions to rest.
These houses
resembled the cliffs of Kailāsa.
Comfortable furniture

21 Adorned them; high whitewashed walls
enclosed them;
their windows were gold-filigreed,
their interiors pearl-studded.

22 Their staircases were conveniently graduated,
their floors covered with plush carpets.
Nosegays everywhere –
and aloe scent.

23 Swan-white, moon-white,
they shone brilliantly even from
a yojana's distance. Their wide doors
could admit a crowd at a time.

24 Their many-metalled structures
glinted like Himālayan peaks.
Resting there for a while,
the kings saw *dakṣiṇā-*

25 Bestowing Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
with his *sadasyas,*
and the yajña-enclosoure with its crowd
of kings, Brahmins, and mahā-ṛṣis,
looking as resplendent
as god-populated heaven.

SECTION THIRTY-FIVE

1 O rājā Janamejaya! Yudhiṣṭhira paid his respects
to-his grandfather Bhīṣma and guru Droṇa
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and said

2 To Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Droṇa's son, Aśvatthāman,
Kṛpa, Duryodhana, and Viviṁśati,
"Advise me
in the conduct of this yajña.

3 Here is all this wealth
that belongs to me.
You have my permission
to make the best use of it."

4 Pāṇḍu's eldest son said this,
and immediately
set about assigning each of them
to responsible offices.

5 Duḥśāsana was given charge
of all catering and comforts,
Āśvatthāman entrusted
with looking after Brahmins.

6 Sañjaya attended to the pūjā-hospitality
given to the rājās,
māhā-intelligent Bhīma and Droṇa
were the general superintendents.

7 Kṛpa took charge of the security
of the diamonds, gold,
pearls and other precious stones,
and *dakṣiṇā*-gifts.

8 Others were assigned other duties.
And those who
were respectfully brought there by Nakula –
Bāhlika, Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Somadatta, and Jayadratha – they stayed on
to enjoy the ceremonies.

9 Wise-in-all-dharmas Kṣattā-Vidura
was made treasurer of the exchequer,
and Duryodhana received the tribute-offerings
of the kings.

10 Krishna, cynosure of all,
to obtain the excellent fruits of the yajña,
personally washed
the feet of the Brahmins.

11 So eager were they to see the sabhā
and please Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
that none came with tribute-offering
less than a thousand of anything.

12 All the kings honoured Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
with massive gem-gifts.
With each offering, the rājā said,
"May the Kuru rājā's yajña

13 Prosper with the gifts I bring."
O rājā Janamejaya,
so crowded was the sacrificial enclosure
of the son of Kuntī

14 With guards, soldiers, and rājās,
with chariots of the gods,
all handsome and opulent,
that it glowed with splendour.

15 The permanent palaces,
so tall they touched the gods' chariots,
the dwellings of the Brahmins
and the specially-constructed mansions
for the kings shone with gems,
and lit up the area.

16 Yudhiṣṭhira seemed to be competing
with Varuṇa in wealth!
Offering huge *daksiṇās*,
he began the yajña of the six fires.

17 All present were given expensive,
desirable presents,
rice, delicious victuals, and jewels.
All were fully gratified.

18 The gods were gratified with the rituals
of *īḍa*, ghee and *homa*,
and the libations poured
by mantra-perfect mahā-ṛṣis.

19 And the Brahmins, like gods,
were gratified with *daksiṇā*,
food and mahā-wealth.
All the castes rejoiced at the yajña.

SECTION THIRTY-SIX

1 On the last day of the yajña
during the anointed-water ceremony,
the Brahmins, mahā-ṛṣis and kings
were taken to the yajña-dais.

2 The mahā-ṛṣis, led by Nārada,
and the rajā-ṛṣis
sitting in mahā-ātmaned Yudhiṣṭhira
yajña-enclosure, looked like gods

3 In the hall of Brahmā.
The endlessly energetic ṛṣis,
sitting relaxed and pleased,
began various discussions.

4 "It's like this."
"No, it cannot be."
"But of course . . ." "How otherwise?"
Phrases used in pointless *vitaṇḍā*-debate.

5 Some of them were adept
at strengthening weak arguments,
and weakening strong ones
by śāstra-based logic.

6 The shrewd among them
swooped on others' points
like eagles diving at bits of meat
thrown in the air.

7 Some were skilled in dharma-and-artha,
others – very strict-vowed scholars
learned in commentary –
indulged in light conversation.

8 The dais, with its assembly
of gods, Brahmins and mahā-ṛṣis,
seemed to glitter
like a star-filled sky.

9 No Śūdra or any man without vows
was permitted to sit
on the inner platform
of Yudhiṣṭhira's yajña.

10 Seeing the enormous prosperity
of illustrious and wise
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
Nārada was delighted.

11 At the same time,
the muni Nārada became pensive
when he saw the great gathering
of illustrious Kṣatriyas.

12 O bull-brave Janamejaya! He recalled the words
he had heard in Brahmā's heaven,
regarding the descent on earth
of different deities.

13 O descendant of the Kurus Janamejaya!
Realising here was a gathering of the gods,
Nārada mentally pictured to himself
lotus-eyed Hari.

14 He thought:
World-creating God-above-gods Nārāyaṇa
has surely taken birth as a Kṣatriya here
in order to keep the promise

15 *He made to the gods long ago*
when he commanded them
to take birth on earth, fight,
kill and be killed, and return to heaven.
Such was the promise
of the great Nārāyaṇa.

16 As a result of this
Śaṁbhu-Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa himself
took birth
in the race of the Yādavas.

17 Born among the Andhaka Vṛṣṇis,
that mighty race-perpetuator
was blessed with good fortune
and shone like the moon among stars.

18 The deity the strength of whose arms
Indra and the gods worshipped –
Hari himself, the great foe-chastiser –
was living in the world of men!

19 *Aho! What more mavellous than this –*
thought Narada – *than that*
the Self-Born Svayambhū himself should take away
all these powerful Kṣatriyas!

20 All-knowing Nārada had this vision,
for he knew that Hari
was Nārāyaṇa, the Supreme Lord
worshipped with yajñas,

21 And so he sat in Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira's sabhā,
Nārada, rich in wisdom and dharma,
and was overcome
with awe.

22 O raja Janamejaya! Bhīṣma went up
to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira and said,
"Great Bharata, let us now
offer reverence to the rājās.

23 Listen carefully, Yudhiṣṭhira.
'The ācārya, the *ṛtvik*,
the relative, *snātaka*, the loved one, and king –
these six are worthy of reverence.'

24 The wise have said that each of these
deserves *arghya*-reverence
if he stays a full year
with the yajña-performer.
These kings have been with us
for a long time,

25 So it is right that we now
take this opportunity to offer *arghya.*
Let the foremost among them
receive it first."

26 "O great Kuru descendant,
respected elder! Pitāmaha!
Who deserves the first *arghya* here? Tell me,"
asked Yudhiṣṭhira.

27 Great Bharata Janamejaya (Vaiśampāyana continued),
Śāntanu's son, brave and intelligent Bhīṣma
decided that Krishna
excelled all on earth.

28 "Bhāskara the sun shames all shining objects,"
said Bhīṣma.
"So Krishna shames all
with his energy, strength, and fame.

29 Like the sun shining
where there is no sun,
like the air blowing
where there is no air,
Krishna comes among us
and makes us happy."

30 As instructed by Bhīṣma,
illustrious Sahadeva performed,
in the approved way, the *arghya*
before Vārṣṇeya Krishna.

31 And Krishna graciously accepted
the traditional reverence.
Śiśupāla, however, was displeased with the pūjā
offered to Vāsudeva-Krishna.

32 The mahā-powerful rājā of the Cedis
criticised Bhīṣma and Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
in the open assembly.
and rebuked Vāsudeva-Krishna.

SECTION THIRTY-SEVEN

1 "Kuru descendant," said Śiśupāla,
"when so many mahā-ātmaned kings
are present here, why is the Vṛṣṇi only
chosen for reverence?

2 Is this conduct of preferring
this lotus-eyed hero for Pāṇḍava reverence
something one expects
from the mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas?

3 Sons of Pāṇḍu, you are childish.
Dharma is a subtle thing,
Are you sure you know what it is?
Gaṅgā's son Bhīṣma
must know little of it indeed
to break its rules.

4 Bhīṣma, if a man like you,
a man dedicated to dharma,
acts simply to please others,
what will good men think of you?

5 This man of the Dāśārhas
is not even a rājā.
How does he get the reverence
that is denied to kings?

6 Bull-brave Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira!
Perhaps you think
Krishna is the eldest here.
What about Vasudeva his father?
How do you revere the son
before the father?

7 Perhaps you think Vāsudeva-Krishna
is the greatest of your well-wishers.
What about Drupada, who is here?
How does Mādhava-Krishna get the pūjā?

8 Perhaps, O Kaurava descendant, Yudhiṣṭhira,
you think Krishna your ācārya.
What about Droṇa, who's here?
How does the Vṛṣṇi get priority?

9 Perhaps, O descendant of Kuru,
you think Krishna your *ṛtvik*.
What about Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa?
How does Krishna get priority?

10 O rājā! So long as Bhīṣma,
Śāntanu's son, is here,
finest of men Bhīṣma,
who can die only when he wills it –
how is it that you have decided
to revere Krishna first?

11 O Kuru descendant,
so long as heroic Aśvatthāman is here,
skilled in every art and science,
how do you revere Krishna first?

12 When best-among-men Indra-among-rājās
Duryodhana is here, and also Kṛpa,
ācārya of the Bharata dynasty,
how do you prefer Krishna?

13 You ignore Druma,
the ācārya of the Kimpuruṣas.
Unconquerable Pāṇḍu-like Bhīṣmaka,
graced with all auspicious marks,

14 Is here; and best-of kings Rukmin;
and Ekalavya;
and Śalya, king of the Madras.
How do you prefer Krishna?

15 And, O great Bharata, Yudhiṣṭhira,
here is the mightiest of mahā-powerful heroes,
the favourite disciple of finest of the twice born
Paraśurāma, Jamadagni's son, –

16 A hero who routed all rājās
with single-handed strength –
Karṇa himself! With Karṇa present,
how does Krishna get priority?

17 O excellent Kaurava!
Madhusūdana-Krishna is not a ṛtvik.
Not an ācārya. Not a rājā.
Why this special fondness for him?

18 If, O Bharata-descendant,
this is what you had planned all along –
to give Madhusūdana-Krishna the reverence –
what was the point
of inviting all these rājās?
What was the point in insulting us?

19 We paid mahā-ātmaned Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
tribute not because we were afraid,
not because we wanted to please him,
not because we wanted something.

20 We paid tribute because it was part of dharma
that he sought imperial dignity
for a Kṣatriya.
Now he insults us.

21 What else is it but insult?
What else to offer *arghya*
to Krishna, who is not a king,
in this gathering of rājās?

22 Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira is known
as a dharmātmā. Why?
What man of dharma will offer pūjā
to a man fallen from dharma?

23 This scoundrel of the Vṛṣṇis
once unjustly killed
the mahā-ātmaned king of Magadha,
Jarāsaṁdha.

24 Oh, dharma has abandoned Yudhiṣṭhira!
Only the baser part
of his nature shows today when,
miserly, wretched, he offers *arghya* to Krishna.

25 And you, Mādhava-Krishna, was it not your duty
to explain the meaning of pūjā
to these foolish and
frightened and miserable sons of Kuntī?

26 Instead, Janārdana-Krishna, you accepted the pūjā
you did not deserve,
as soon as it was offered
by these wretched princes!

27 And you enjoy the undeserved pūjā
they gave you,
like a dog in a corner licking
the sacred ghee he's run off with.

28 O Janārdana-Krishna, it is not you
who insults us Indras-among-kings today.
Today it is these Kauravas
who have insulted you.

29 Slayer of Madhu, Madhusādana-Krishna,
this pūjā you've collected today
is like a wife
to an impotent man,
like a beautiful scene
to a blind man.

30 Today we have seen through rājā Yudhiṣṭhira;
we have seen through Bhīṣma –
and through Vāsudeva-Krishna.
You all stand naked."

31 Śiśupāla rose from his splendid seat
(Vaiśampāyana continued)
and, with all the rājās following,
walked out of the sabhā.

SECTION THIRTY-EIGHT

1 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
ran after Śiśupāla
and spoke to him softly
these soothing, sweet words:

2 "Lord of the earth, O rājā,
should you have said what you said?
Words of adharma,
needlessly insulting.

3 O king, do not insult Bhīṣma,
Śāntanu's son, by wrongly thinking
that he is not aware
of what dharma is.

4 After all, look – all these kings,
all older than you,
accept the reverence offered to Krishna.
You should too.

5 King of Cedi! It is Bhīṣma
who knows Krishna really.
You do not know Krishna so well
as this Kaurava does."

6 "The man who refuses to approve
the worship of Krishna,
who is the most ancient in the universe,"
said Bhīṣma,
"does not deserve sweet words
and gentle persuasion.

7 Any Kṣatriya chief who defeats
another Kṣatriya and sets him free,
becomes to the freed Kṣatriya
his guru.

8 I do not see any rājā
in this sabha
who has not been defeated by the valour
of Devakī's son Krishna.

9 Mahā-muscled Krishna, hero of unfading fame,
deserves reverence
not only from us,
but from all in the three worlds.

10 Some of the greatest bull-brave Kṣatriyas
have been defeated by Krishna in battle.
The entire universe
rests in Vārṣṇeya-Krishna alone.

11 Which is why we revere Krishna,
though there are
other great kings, and elders.
You should not have said what you said.

12 O rājā! I have served many men
hoary with knowledge.
Praise of the endless
and marvellous glories of Krishna –

13 That is what I have always heard
from them.
From earliest days to now,
all the exploits of Krishna –

14 These I have heard repeatedly,
from the lips of people.
O rājā of Cedi, do not think
we are whimsical

15 In revering Janārdana-Krishna,
or that we want benefits from him,
or that we think of him kindly
just because he is a relative.
All good men all over the world worship him,
the source of their joy.

16 We revered him first,
keeping his heroism, success,
and glory in mind.
Everyone here was given due consideration.

17 We left out many learned ones,
many of great accomplishments.
Hari-Krishna was our considered choice.
Among Brahmins, the man
who has knowledge; among Kṣatriyas,
the one with strength;

18 Among Vaiśyas, the man
who has wealth; among Sudras,
the man who is old in years –
these deserve pūjā-respect.
There are two reasons
for revering Govinda-Krishna –

19 All the Vedas and Vedāṅgas
are known to Keśava-Krishna,
and he has shown great prowess.
Who else can boast as much?

20 Generosity, shrewdness, immersion in *śruti*,
bravery, gentleness,
humility, enterprise, intelligence, handsomeness,
firmness, joy and success – are Krishna's.

21 You should approve reverence
shown to anyone so gifted.
He is our guru and our father,
worthy of honour and *arghya*.

22 He is our *ṛtvik*, our guru,
our ācārya, our *snātaka*,
our king and our loved friend.
So we revere Acyuta-Krishna.

23 He is the origin of the universe,
and its dissolution.
Whatever is moving and unmoving
is born from Krishna.

24 He is the Unmanifested Essence,
the Eternal Creator,
beyond his own creation.
Acyuta-Krishna deserves the highest pūjā.

25 The intellect, the senses, the elements
of air, fire, water, space, earth,
the four forms of life –
rest in Krishna.

26 The sun, the moon, the stars, the planets,
the major and minor points
of the horizon –
rest in Krishna.

27 The *agnihotṛ* is the supreme ritual,
the Gāyatrī the supreme metre,
the rājā supreme among men,
the ocean among rivers;

28 The moon is supreme among planets,
the sun among flaming gases,
Meru among mountains,
Garuḍa among birds;

29 So Bhagavān Keśava-Krishna is supreme
in all the worlds,
including the gods' heavens,
anywhere in this universe,
down, or up, or on both sides
(continued Vaiśampāyana)."

30 Descendant-of-the-Kauravas learned Yudhiṣṭhira
heard the speech of Bhīṣma
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and said:

31 "Pitāmaha, revered elder, I am eager
to listen to all
the glories of Krishna in detail.
Narrate them to me.

32 Tell me all about his actions
and manifestations on earth.
Tell me all, Pitāmaha,
about Krishna's inmost nature."

33 O bull-brave Bharata Janamejaya!
Asked by Yudhiṣṭhira,
Bhīṣma, in the presence of all those assembled,
in Krishna's own presence, sang

34 The glory of Vāsudeva-Krishna,
Śatakratu-Indra-like Krishna –
all his divine deeds,
which none can perfectly describe.

35 The kings sat around Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
and listened patiently,
even as Bhīṣma narrated, gently and persuasively,
Krishna's greatness

36 Before the foe-vanquishing rājā
of Cedi, Śiśupāla.
Yudhiṣṭhira of the Kurus
listened patiently too.

37 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! It is a long story
(began Bhīṣma) –
this account of Krishna's greatness.
Let me begin at the beginning.

38 He is the Unmanifested
who makes himself manifest.
He is the ancient Nārāyaṇa,
the Self-Born, the Supreme Pitāmaha.

39 He has hundreds of heads.
He is Puruṣa,
Dhruva, the Eternal Unmanifest.
He has hundreds of eyes,
Mouths, feet, names.

40 Hundreds of crowns!
He shines. He is world-formed.
He has many colours.
He is more than all the gods,
He is beyond the Unmanifested.

41 In the beginning
Lord Nārāyaṇa
created water.
From water
Bhagavan Nārāyaṇa
created Brahmā.

42
Brahmā has
four faces,
Brahmā
created
all the worlds,
all that is.

43
When the End of creation
comes,
all the worlds,
Brahmā included,
revert
to the first condition.

44
And all beings
revert
to the first condition;
only the Ātman-of-all
Lord Nārāyaṇa
remains.

45
Nārāyaṇa,
O Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira,
is everywhere:
heaven-head,
sky-middle,
earth-feet.

46
The twin Aśvins
are his nostrils,
the sun and moon
his two eyes,
Indra and Vaiśvānara-Agni
his mouth.

47
Other gods too
depend on this Mahā-Ātman.
Like pearts
strung on a thread,
the worlds
depend on Hari-Krishna.

48 After the End of Creation,
seeing all beings
wrapped in darkness,
Mahāyogi Nārāyaṇa
manifested himself
as Brahmā.

49 Thus he of never-
fading glory,
as Brahmā
created Sanatkumāra,
and Rudra,
Manu and the ṛṣis.

50 He indeed created
all there is.
Manu sub-created.
Others sub-created.
And Eternal Brahmā
became manifold.

51 O descendant of Bharata, Yudhiṣṭhira,
crores of time-cycles
have already been,
crores of dissolutions
of time-cycles
have also been.

52 Mahāyuga, yuga,
kalpa and dissolution –
this is the wheel
of cosmic Kāla.
All that there is,
is born of Viṣṇu.

53 Creating four-faced Brahmā,
for the welfare
of the worlds,
Lord Nārāyaṇa
resposes
on the ocean of nectar.

54 Brahmā is
the revered Pitāmaha
of all creatures;
so Nārāyaṇa is
the Pitāmaha-above-all
of all.

55 Who, unmanifested,
is in the manifested –
who, at creation
and dissolution,
is always present –
that is Nārāyaṇa.

56 And, Yudhiṣṭhira,
it is Hari-Krishna,
as Nārāyaṇa,
who created Brahmā,
the Sun and Moon,
and established Dharma.

57 Innermost Ātman
of all beings,
multi-formed Lord –
many are his
marvellous manifestations.
Let me describe them.

58 Yuga after yuga
comes and goes,
and he remains,
God of the gods,
Lord of the universe,
Jagat-pati.

59 In the past when the yuga
was over,
he used his power
to create Parameṣṭhin-Brahmā,
Kapila, the gods,
the seven ṛṣis, Śaṅkara-Śiva,

60 Sanatkumāra,
Manu
and Prajāpati.
Effulgent Nārāyaṇa
created the hosts
of lesser gods.

61 Aeons ago,
gods, anti-gods,
men and rākṣasas
dissolved in
the final dissolution.
In the ocean of Kāla

62 Two fearful Daityas,
Madhu and Kaiṭabha,
brothers, survived.
Nārāyaṇa boon-tricked
them – and slew
both of them.

63 They say both these māhā-antigods
were born from the dirt
in Viṣṇu's ears.
Mahā-ātmaned Viṣṇu created them,
it is said,
from earth-dust.

64 Massive as two
Himālayan peaks,
they lolled
on the ocean-waters.
Brahmā breathed the wind-god
Vāyu in them,

65 And they swelled
till they straddled
the heavens.
Brahmā ran
his fingers
on their huge bodies.

66 One was soft,
the other rough.
Water-born
Brahmā
then named them
both.

67 The soft-skinned
he named Madhu,
the rough-skinned
Kaiṭabha.
The two brandished
their strengths.

68 The mahā-antigods overshadowed
the heavens.
Madhu and Kaiṭabha
grew and grew
till they covered
all the worlds.

69 In the universe
filled with water,
they came,
eager to fight. World-Pītāmaha
Brahmā, seeing them,
quickly assumed

70 Water-shape,
and hid himself
in the navel-lotus
of Padmanābha-Viṣṇu.
Though called *paṅkaja*,
or "mud-born",

71 The lotus
is not *paṅkaja*.
Brahmā chose
that lotus
to assure
his own safety.

72 Nārāyaṇa
and four-faced Brahmā
slumbered in the womb
of those waters
for countless years.
Nothing stirred.

73 After many years,
Madhu and Kaiṭabha
arrived
where Brahmā
and Nārāyaṇa
were sleeping.

74 Seeing them,
lotus-navelled
mahā-radiant Viṣṇu rose.
Viṣṇu's eyes
flashed
in anger.

75 A fierce battle
raged
between Viṣṇu
and the two brothers.
In those world-
melting waters,

76 The battle raged
for thousands of years.
But never
was Viṣṇu able
to subdue
the two brothers.

77 The two Daityas,
delighted,
proud of their strength,
said to Nārāyaṇa:
"Lord of gods!
We are pleased

78 With your battle-skills.
It is a pleasure
to be killed by you.
Crush us
in a place
not submerged in water.

79 And when we die,
let people say
we were your sons.
Whoever defeats
us in battle,
we are his sons."

80 Nārāyaṇa
heard them say this,
and caught
them firmly between his thighs,
and squeezed them
to death.

81 Their mingled corpses
became fluid flesh
in the waters.
Their viscous marrow
mixed with and darkened
the waters.

82 From that marrow-slush
Nārāyaṇa
created
various forms of life.
Since from that
slushy fat, *meda*,

83 The whole world
was darkened, the earth
is called *medinī*.
Lotus-navelled Viṣṇu's
grace made her
fit for mankind.

84 Scion of the Kurus Yudhiṣṭhira!
Nārāyaṇa has had
many births on earth.
Let me describe
some to you.
Listen carefully.

85 In the distant past,
when lotus-navelled
Viṣṇu rested
on the waters,
he appeared before
the gods and great ṛṣis.

86 These are known
as the water-revelations,
and mention
is made of them
in the sacred texts
of śruti and the Vedas.

87 Mahātmā Viṣṇu
as the Boar-manifestation –
this is part
of śruti-scriptures too.
As the Boar,
Viṣṇu redeemed the earth's

88 Mountains and forests
from the water-age.
The four Vedas
are the four feet
of Varāha the Boar,
the yajña-post his tusk,

89 Fire his tongue,
kuśa-grass his fur,
night and day his eyes,
the Vedāṅgas
his various limbs,
the śrutis his ornaments,

90 Ghee his nostrils,
the yajña ladle
his jutting lower lip,
the chant of the sacred
Sāmaveda his mahā-
reverberating roars.

91 His body was massive.
Dharma and Truth
were his shape,
he dazzled
with refulgent glory.
Penance his nails,

92 Patience his strength,
holiness his temendous
straddling size,
the yajña-altar his shoulders,
the fire's fragrance
his swiftness,

93 The *udgātra's* homa
his lingam,
seeds and flowers his food,
the Brahma-mantras
his breath, the *dakṣinā*
his heart's centre.

94 He was a mahāyogī,
he knew the śāstras;
noble deeds were
his real ornaments,
his own reflection
was his wife.

95 He was tall like a gem-
rich mountain.
Becoming Varāha
the Boar avatāra,
Sanātana-Viṣṇu dived deep
below the waters,

96 And emerged
with the forests and hills
and, redeemed with his tusks
the earth his Sva-devī,
in the presence
of ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya.

97 Shining-with-the-beauty-
of-many-heads,
he with his tusks
stabilised the earth,
and brought joy
and peace again.

98 This was how the past-
present-future-formed
Boar-avatāra
redeemed Pṛthivī-devī long ago.
God-of-gods Viṣṇu destroyed
all the Dānavas.

99 So much for the Boar.
Listen now to the story
of the Man-Lion,
and how he killed
the anti-god named
Hiraṇyakaśipu,

100 Lord of the Daityas,
Hiraṇyakaśipu, implacable
enemy of the gods.
Strong, proud;
he was a thorn
in the three worlds.

101 He was patient;
and valiant;
first of the Daityas.
It was he, O rājā,
who spent long years
doing forest-tapasyā.

102 After eleven thousand
five hundred years
of tapasyā, he became
like a charred stick,
he took severe vows,
he was perfect.

103 O king without fault! Yudhiṣṭhira!
Brahmā was pleased
with his discipline,
his brahmacarya,
his vow of silence,
his self-cleansing.

104 And, flying his *haṁsa-*
vehicle, Self-Born
Svayambhū-Brahmā, pleased,
lustrous like the sun,
appeared personally
before Hiraṇyakaśipu.

105 Accompanying him
were the Adityas,
Vasus, Sādhyas,
the Maruts, the gods,
Rudras, Viśvadevas,
Yaksas, rākṣasas, Kinnaras,

106 The quarters, the sub-quarters,
rivers,
oceans, planets,
muhūrtas, and all
the various
sky-constellations,

107 Tapasyā-dedicated deva-ṛṣis,
Siddhas, the seven ṛṣis,
the holy rāja-ṛṣis,
the gandharvas,
and the numerous
apsarās also.

108 Surrounded
by the hosts of gods,
Guru of moving-and-unmoving life
Brahmā came
to the Daitya
and said:

109 "Strict-vowed Daitya!
I am pleased
with your tapasyā.
May you prosper!
Ask a boon.
What do you wish?"

110 "Only this,"
replied Hiraṇyakaśipu,
"that no god,
anti-god, gandharva, yakṣa,
nāga, rākṣasa, man or piśāca
shall defeat me.

111 Grandfather of the universe!
Also this, Pītāmaha –
that no ṛṣi in anger
should ever cast
a curse on me,"
he added.

112 "No weapons, no hill,
no tree, nothing dry,
nothing wet,
nor anything else
should be the cause
of my death.

113 Pitāmaha! Not in the sky,
not on earth,
not at night
nor in the morning,
neither inside nor out,
shall I die.

114 Neither beast nor bird
shall kill me.
O God of gods! Deva-deva!
If you are pleased
with my devotion,
great me this boon."

115 "*Tātā*! Child! So be it,"
said Brahmā.
"I grant your strange wish.
There is no doubt
that what I grant
will be fulfilled."

116 Saying this (Bhīṣma continued),
Bhagavān Brahmā
ascended to the regions
of the gods,
where he shone
in brilliant splendour.

117 The gods, gandharvas,
nāgas and munis
heard of the boon,
and immediately
hurried to the presence
of Brahmā.

118 "Bhagavan! Revered one," they said,
"with his boon
he will oppress us.
Be gracious,
and show us a way
of killing him,

119 Because you are
the Self-born Creator,
Lord of all,
Receiver of yajña-offerings,
and Stable
of Form."

120 Hearing the gods' desire
for the welfare of the world,
Prajāpati-Brahmā
advised
the assembly
of deities:

121 "The tapasyā that he
has done will bear
its deserved fruit.
When the fruits are exhausted,
then will Bhagavān Krishna
destroy him."

122 Reassured by these words
of Brahmā about
Hiraṇyakaśipu's death,
the gods,
pleased, returned
to their heavenly abode.

123 No sooner had he
been granted the boon
than Hiraṇyakaśipu
began a career
of insolent
and incessant oppression.

124 Surrounded by hordes
of Daityas, that Indra-of-Daityas
enjoyed himself.
He brought the seven islands
and other regions
under his control.

125 He routed the gods
of the three worlds
and established
undisputed sway
over them and over
their possessions.

126 With the three worlds
in his power, the mahā-antigod
ruled from heaven.
Drunk with success
assured by the boon,
he lorded it in heaven.

127 Soon enough
that mahā-antigod,
desirous to become
another Indra,
conquered the Moon,
Agni, the Maruts, the Sun,

128 The waters, the sky,
the planets, the ten points
of the heavens,
Anger, Kāma,
Varuṇa, the Vasus,
even Aryaman,

129 Dhanada-Kubera, lord of wealth,
the lord of yakṣas
and Kimpuruṣas.
In fact, he wanted
to become all of them,
so he defeated them.

130 Having defeated them,
he took over
all their activities.
He made himself
the sole recipient
of the yajña-oblations

131 Offered by the ṛṣis
to the gods.
He freed the dwellers
in the regions of hell
and made them
dwellers of heaven.

132 Next, he attacked
the munis' āśramas
and repeatedly
harassed all
truth-and-dharma-observing,
sense-conquering, strict-vowed sages.

133 He gave yajña-rights
to the Daityas,
and rendered null
the rights of the gods.
Wherever the gods fled,
he pursued them,

134 And oppressed them.
There was no place
left for them finally.
He tyrannised thus
for five crores
sixty one lakhs

135 And sixty thousand years.
During this time,
the ill-minded anti-god
Hiraṇyakaśipu
enjoyed all manner
of divine pleasures.

136 Disgusted with
the endless depredations
of Hiraṇyakaśipu,
Indra and other gods
decided to approach
once again

137 Brahmā, Pitāmaha
of the three worlds.
They did *añjali*, and said:
"Lord of present and past time!
Save us
from the fearful Daitya!

138 You are the first
Creator of all beings,
You are Self-Born,
You are Lord of Nature,
You are the Enjoyer
of yajña-offerings."

139 "Listen to me, gods,"
said Brahma.
"It is difficult for me
to help you in this.
Seek the help
of indwelling Nārāyaṇa.

140 He is the World-Formed,
Rich-Lustrous, Unmanifested,
Deathless, All-Caring Lord.
In times of distress,
both you and I
have to go to him.

141 He is the Unmanifest,
I am the manifest.
From me the creatures
of the worlds,
and the gods and anti-gods
took birth.

142 In the same way that I
am your lord, O gods,
Nārāyaṇa is my lord.
I am the Pitāmaha
of creatures, and Viṣṇu
the Pra-Pitāmaha.

143 Only Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa
can help to overcome
this Hiraṇyakaśipu,
Nothing is impossible for him.
Do not grieve,
Go to him."

144 Quickly (continued
Bhīṣma) the gods
hurried to where
Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa
reposed on the ocean
of sweet milk.

145 The Ādityas, Maruts,
Sadhyas, Viśvadevas,
Vasus, Rudras,
the mahā-ṛṣis,
the handsome Aśvins,
and countless others

146 Of varied divine births
went together,
led by four-faced Brahmā
to the place known
as Śvetadvīpa,
the Immaculate Island.

147 On the ocean
Of sweet milk
The gods saw
Resting
On the Cosmic Serpent
Ananta –

148 Infinite and Eternal
Lustrous God!
God!
The Vedas!
The Yajñas!
Brahman!
Omnipotent! Mahā-Powerful!

149 Past-Present-formed and Future!
Inmost Essence
Of the universe! Nārāyaṇa!
Divine Origin and Refuge
And Goal of all!
And they stood
Before him, the Revered Lord
Of the worlds.

150 “Lord of the gods,”
they said,
“kill Hiraṇyakaśipu
and save us.
You are the only hope
we and Brahmā have.

151 Lord with eyes
like full-blown lotuses!
You help the helpless.
So help us today,
and proceed with the destruction
of the Daityas.”

152 Viṣṇu listened (Bhīṣma
continued), and then
the Lord of endless fame,
intending to help
the afflicted gods,
said to them:

153 “Cast off fear!
I make you fearless.
Return to heaven,
O gods,
and live there
as you always did.

154 I will see to it
that proud Hiraṇyakaśipu
whom none can kill,
and his hordes
of Daitya-followers
are destroyed by me.”

155 “Bhagavān of the present
and future,” said Brahmā,
“these gods are desperate.
Hurry, O Lord,
with the destruction
of the Indra of the Daityas.”

156 Bhagavān Viṣṇu replied:
“It will be done soon,
as you wish.
Go now,
return to your abodes
in heaven.”

157 Bhagavān Viṣṇu bid them
farewell (continued
Bhīṣma), and quickly
took equal parts
of a half-lion
and a half-man.

158 He joined one part
to the other,
and the awesome
Man-Lion arose!
Mahā-Radiant Nara-Siṁha!
Like Antaka-Kāla!

159 Hari-Īśvara-Viṣṇu in that form
approached Hiraṇyakaśipu.
Seeing him come,
the Daityas let loose
a volley of missiles
at the mahā-powerful one.

160 Hari-Viṣṇu devoured
all the missiles, swallowing
them easily,
even as he swallowed
and devoured thousands
of fierce Daityas.

161 Infuriated, he destroyed
thousands of Daitya
chieftains, and finally
he launched a fierce attack
on mahā-powerful
Hiraṇyakaśipu himself.

162 The Man-Lion was
as awesome as
sky-darkening clouds;
he cloud-bellowed,
he was cloud-strong
and cloud-swift.

163 Like an enraged lion,
the fierce Nara-Siṁha,
seeing the Daityas
advance towards him,
brandished his claws
and prepared for battle.

164 When saṁdhyā-dusk arrived,
mahā-powerful Nara-Siṁha caught hold
of Hiraṇyakaśipu
at the palace's threshold,
tore open his chest
and slew him.

165 This was how the mahā-powerful
Hari-Nārāyaṇa,
as he had promised,
speedily exterminated
the Indra-of-the-Daityas
Hiraṇyakaśipu.

166 This is how Hari-Viṣṇu
redeemed the gods
from the Daityas,
and re-established
the reign of Dharma
in the three worlds.

167 Son of Pāṇḍu! Yudhiṣṭhira!
This in brief is the story
of Nara-siṁha.
Listen now to the story
of the mahā-ātmaned
Dwarf incarnation.

168 In the Tretā-yuga, O rājā,
Virocana's son Bali
was lord of the Daityas.
None as strong as him
and none as brave
on the field of battle.

169 Assisted by his horde
of anti-gods, Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
Bali attacked
and conquered Indra's capital,
and became sole ruler
of Indra's heaven.

170 Bewildered and afraid,
Indra and other gods,
unable to defend themselves,
hurried to the ocean of nectar
where Nārāyaṇa reposed;
addressing him,

171 Indra and the gods
asked Nārāyaṇa
for help.
And Hari-Nārāyaṇa,
out of boundless compassion,
gave them darshan. It is said

172 That, as a result,
he took birth
from Aditi's womb.
Krishna of the Yādavas,
the Krishna you know,
was born in the past

173 As Āditī's son,
Upendra,
Indra's younger brother.
And it so happened
that in those days
the Daitya king Bali

174 Decided to perform
a massive Horse-Sacrifice.
O Yudhiṣṭhira,
when the yajña began,
Viṣṇu, disguised
as a Brahmin,

175 Head shaved, carrying
a black deer-skin
and yajña-offerings,
a *palāśa* rod
in one hand, entered
the sacrificial enclosure.

176 He was the Dwarf-
avatāra, Vāmana:
he shone with glory.
Entering Bali's
yajña-ceremonies,
he exclaimed:

177 "I want three foot-
measures of land
as my *dakṣiṇā.*"
He repeated: "Three
foot-measures of land."
The mahā-antigod Bali reflected,

178 And gave the land
exactly as Viṣṇu
had asked.
No sooner had he got
the land than
he began growing.

179 At first he looked
only a small boy,
but within those
three foot-measures
he now encompassed
heaven, sky, and earth.

180 And the king Bali,
when he saw this
happen at his yajña,
though he was impossible
to control, by this the mahā-antigod
became controllable.

181 Present at the yajña
were Vipracitta
and other anti-gods,
variously dressed,
red-faced, irascible, mahā-bodied,
mahā-powerful.

182 They brandished
all kinds of weapons,
they wore garlands,
they were smeared
with sandal-paste,
they were horrendous.

183 Seeing Hari-Viṣṇu straddle
heaven, earth, and sky
in three foot-measures,
they lifted their weapons
and surrounded him
on all four sides.

184 Mahā-awesome Viṣṇu kicked
and slapped the anti-gods
into submission,
and took over lordship
of the entire earth.
One leg of Viṣṇu

185 Reached to the skyey
regions of the Ādityas.
His glory radiated
with more brilliant
radiance than that
of the sun.

186 His radiance flooded
all the worlds
and the skyey quarters –
a beautiful, dazzling
vision of splendour!
As he stood on

187 The earth, his height
was such that the sun
and moon reached
his chest. When he
measured the sky,
they touched his navel.

188 And when he stepped
beyond sky and heaven,
the sun and moon
were on his toe-level.
This is how the twice-born
describe Viṣṇu's glory.

189 When Viṣṇu's foot
touched Brahmā's world,
the universe shuddered,
cracked, water gushed forth
and fell in the ocean:
Gaṅgā was born.

190 Janārdana-Viṣṇu slaughtered
the bull-brave Dānavas
and overran their kingdoms;
he consigned
their wives and sons
to the lower regions of hell.

191 Namuci, Śambara
and mahā-minded Prahlāda,
cleansed by his touch,
were nonetheless sent
to the hell of Pātāla.
And Hari-Viṣṇu gave all

192 A vision of past,
present and future
revolving in his
wondrous world-form.
The universe seemed
to be resting in him.

193 Nothing exists that does
not exist in him.
Seeing that Maheśa Mahā-Ātman,
the gods, Dānavas
and humans marvelled,
and were silent.

194 Mahā-ātmaned Viṣṇu trapped
proud Bali in his yajna-
enclosure, and flung
Virocana's family
from heaven
into the hell of Pātāla.

195 Even after all these
magnificent feats,
Viṣṇu, rider of Garuḍa,
was not proud
of the splendour
of his achievement.

196 Slayer-of-Danavas' Viṣṇu
restored mahā-ātmaned Śakra-Indra
to lordship
of heaven and the gods,
and gave him back
sovereignty of the three worlds.

197 This in brief is the story
of the Vāmana
Dwarf-appearance of Viṣṇu.
Let me now give you
an account of Viṣṇu's
human appearances.

198 Mahārāja! First I will describe
mahā-ātmaned Viṣṇu's appearance
as Dattātreya.
Dattātreya was famed
as a ṛṣi
of mahā-effulgence.

199 A long time ago,
it so happened
that the Vedas were forgotten,
and Vedic practices
got corrupted.
The four castes blundered

200 Into one caste, and Dharma
became feeble.
Adharma replaced Dharma,
Untruth drove out Truth.
The people became restless,
seeing Dharma decline.

201 It was then that mahā-
ātmaned Dattātreya
restored the yajña-
worship and rituals,
and made each caste
again fulfil its duties.

202 It was Dattātreya
who made the promise
to the Haihaya king Kārtavīrya-Arjuna
who, with careful service,
pleased Dattātreya
in every way.

203 Kārtavīrya-Arjuna devoted himself
completely to Dattātreya
in the forest.
He saw no fault
in anyone, he was
compassionate and humble.

204 It was only after
a long dedication
that he pleased Dattātreya,
who was supreme
among perfected mortals,
honoured by holy men.

205 Excepting immortality,
Dattātreya granted
all his wishes.
He had asked
for four boons,
and Dattātreya granted them.

206 The Haihaya king Kārtavīrya-Arjuna said:
"First, grant that I
become wisest, strongest,
most truthful
and faultless among men.
Second, grant that I

207 Become undisputed lord
of all creatures
in this world,
womb-born or egg-born,
ruling them
with dharma,

208 Third, grant that I
propitiate the gods,
ṛṣis, pitṛs and Brahmins
with yajñas, and that
I slaughter wholesale
my enemies in war.

209 Fourth, grant that I
meet death at the hands
of one who has
no equal in this world
or heaven, – neither had,
nor has, nor will have."

210 Arjuna was Kārtavīrya's
eldest son, and shone
in arms-skills.
He ruled in Mahīṣmatī
for a hundred thousand years
in full glory.

211 Like the sun flooding
the sky with light,
Kārtavīrya-Arjuna
ruled the earth
and all its islands
with radiant authority.

212 He annexed the island
kingdoms of Indra,
Kaśeru, Tāmara,
Gabhastimān, Gandharva,
Varuṇa and Saubhyākṣa
with his prowess –

213 A feat even his ancestors
had failed to accomplish.
His chief palace
was a towering edifice
of pure gold;
he divided his kingdom

214 Into four territories
for ruling convenience:
one supported the army,
the second the cultivators,
the third paid for yajñas.
Kārtavīrya-Arjuna was loved by all.

215 The fourth territory
was used for the suppresion
of robbers and criminals.
The only wealth rājā-Arjuna
thought worth having
was that won by honesty,

216 By fair means, by the strength
of one's military prowess.
Any person found guilty
of amassing wealth
by illegal means,
was executed.

217 The result was that
in his reign no doors
were ever locked.
Kārtavīrya-Arjuna protected his kingdom,
its women, its cows,
and its goats.

218 He guarded the cultivated fields.
Such are the glories
of Rājā Kārtavīrya-Arjuna,
which cannot
be compared
with anyone else's.

219 No king of the past
equalled the greatness
of Kārtavīrya, no king
of the future will equal it.
When he stepped in water,
his dress remained dry.

220 With the grace
of Lord Dattātreya,
Kārtavīrya-Arjuna
ruled in this fashion
for hundreds of thousands
of years.

221 And his people prospered.
This, great Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira,
is the story of the appearance
of Viṣṇu as Dattātreya.
Listen now to accounts
of his other appearances.

222 The next appearance
of mahā-ātmaned Viṣṇu
is as Paraśu-Rāma, Jamadagnī's son.
Why he arose among
the Bhṛgus, and how,
I will now narrate.

223 Rāma-with-Axe was
the ṛṣi Jamadagni's son.
He was the one
who united the race
of the Haihayas.
Kārtavīrya-Arjuna

224 Brooked no rivals
in respect of his valour,
but his deviant deeds
made it imperative
for him to be killed
by Paraśu-Rāma.

225 Kārtavīrya-Arjuna
of the Haihayas stood
erect in his chariot,
but Paraśu-Rāma
dragged him down
and slaughtered him.

226 It is Govinda-Krishna himself
who appeared as
the Bhṛgu Paraśu-Rāma.
It is he who killed the anti-gods
named Jambha
and Śatadundubhi.

227 He was born on earth
to redeem it
from thousand-conquering,
thousand-armed-Kārtavīrya-Arjuna.
Mighty Paraśu-Rāma,
with the help of his bow,

228 Defeated six hundred
and forty thousand Kṣatriyas
on the Sarasvatī's banks.
He was committed
to unceasing hostility
against those Brahmin-haters.

229 At the time of slaughtering them,
bull-among-men
Paraśu-Rāma also wiped out
forty thousand other heroes.
Then ten thousand more.
Countless others were beheaded.

230 Fourteen thousand more Brahmin-
haters were annihilated.
Then he bathed.
Because the oppressed Brahmins
had pleaded "Rāma! Rāma!"
Paraśu-Rāma did what he did.

231 "Help! Save us, O Rāma
of the Bhrgus!" Whenever
Paraśu-Rāma heard this,
he could not check himself,
and would rush out
to save the twice-born.

232 The kings of Kāśmīra,
Darada, Kuntibhoja,
Kṣudraka, Malava,
Cedi, Kāśi, Kuruṣa,
Ṛṣika, Kratha,
and Kauśika;

233 Aṅga, Baṅga,
Kaliṅga, Magadha,
Kāśī, Kosala,
Rātrāyana, Vitihotra,
Kirāta, and the lord
of Mārtikāvata –

234 These and other mighty heroes
became targets
for the invincible arrows
of Paraśu-Rāma.
All these Indras-among-rājās were sent
to Vivasvata-Yama, god of death.

235 This Meru-and-Mandara-
glittering earth became
a field of corpses.
Paraśu-Rāma slaughtered
the entire Kṣatriya race
twenty-one times over.

236 After re-establishing
the performance of yajnas,
Paraśu-Rāma fought
a hundred years against king Śālva
who rode an air-chariot
named Saubha.

237 Sitting in his splendid chariot,
Saubha-opposing
Paraśu-Rāma
of the illustrious Bhṛgus
heard the chanting
of young, virginal *nagnikās*:

238 "Rāma! Rāma!
Mahā-muscled hero!
Leave all your Bhārgava glory!
You cannot overpower
The Saubha air-chariot.

239 Lord of the cakra,
Viṣṇu,
Wielder of the mace,
Viṣṇu,
Friend of the fear-stricken,
Krishna,
You, with the help of
Pradyumna

And with the help of
Sāmba,
Will vanquish the air-chariot
Saubha."

240 Tiger-among-men Paraśu-Rāma heard,
and went away
to the forest. Anticipating
the timely coming of Krishna,
Paraśu-Rāma placed
all his weapons in water –

241 His chariot, armour,
finger-protectors,
arrows, chariot, axe, –
and devoted himself
with intense concentration
to tapasyā.

242 Foe-destroying dharmātmā Paraśu-Rāma
with the grace of
Hlī wife of Dharma,
Prajñā, goddess of wisdom,
Śrī, goddess of beauty,
Lakṣmī, goddess of prosperity,
and Kīrtī, of fame,
renounced his chariot
and other war-weapons.

243 Paraśu-Rāma refrained
from destroying Saubha
out of respect
for the prediction in the past,
as chanted by the girls,
not because he could not.

244 Paraśu-Rāma is the same
Krishna that you see.
Let me now, O rājā,
proceed with the manifestation of Viṣṇu
as Rāma, who always walked placing
ṛṣi Viśvāmitra ahead of him.

245 On the ninth day
of the bright fortnight of Caitra,
Viṣṇu, dividing himself
in four forms,
manifested himself
in Daśaratha's palace.

246 He shone refulgent
like the sun! His fame
as prince Rāma spread.
Eternal Viṣṇu took birth
on the earth in order
to re-establish Dharma.

247 Indeed, on earth he is regarded
as another form
of Hari-Viṣṇu.
It so happened that a rākṣasa
who obstructed Viśvāmitra's yajña
was killed by Rāma,

248 And another called Marica
severely wounded. Wise Viśvāmitra
gave Rāma such celestial
weapons that even the gods
found it difficult to tell
what they all were.

249 During the great Bow-Yajña
of the mahā-ātmaned king Janaka,
Rāma effortlessly, with the help
of Lord-of-the-world Maheśvara-Śiva,
snapped the bow in two,
as if it was all a game.

250 In this way Raghu-vallabha Rāma
won Sītā as his bride,
and returned to the capital,
Ayodhyā, where they passed
their days happily
as a newly-wed couple.

251 Some years later, abiding
by his father's wishes,
and in order to please
his stepmother Kaikeyī,
the couple went
into voluntary forest-exile.

252 Knower-of-all-dharmas and
eager-for-everyone's-welfare Rāma,
with his brother Lakṣmaṇa,
spent fourteen years
of exile in the forest.
O Bharata-Yudhiṣṭhira!

253 He passed his fourteen years doing
tapāsyā of all kinds,
Always by his side
was his lovely wife, Sītā,
respected by the people
for her fidelity.

254 As Lakṣmī to Viṣṇu,
so Sītā to Rāma.
Lakṣmī was born as Sītā
to attend on Viṣṇu
as Rāma.
On earth, Rāma assiduously

255 Sought the gods' welfare.
To protect his subjects, Dharmātmā
Rāma killed fourteen thousand
rākṣasas, among whom were
Mārica, Khara-Dūṣaṇa,
and Triśirā.

256 In those days there lived,
as rākṣasas, two gandharvas
named Virādha and Kabandha.
Rāma made it his duty
to kill both these
fierce and callous creatures.

257 He was responsible
for cutting off the nose
of Rāvaṇa's sister.
He suffered separation
from his wife, and searched
for her everywhere in the forest.

258 Reaching Ṛṣyamūka hill,
he crossed Pampā lake,
met Sugrīva and mahā-powerful
Hanumān, Indra-among-forest-folk,
and established close friendship
with both.

259 With Sugrīva he went
to Kiṣkindhā and killed
the chief of the tree-folk Vālī;
he placed Sugrīva
on the throne,
and continued his search.

260 Anxiety for Sītā's welfare
spurred him on.
He searched high and low.
Vāyu's son Hanumān
brought him information
that Sītā was in Laṅkā.

261 Constructing a bridge
with the help of his army
of vānara forest-folk,
Rāma attacked the island
kingdom of Laṅkā
to rescue Sītā.

262 There ruled with his hosts of rākṣasas Rāvaṇa,
the Indra-among-rākṣasas,
fierce-in-battle
and incapable of being killed
by gods, *uraga*-serpents,
yakṣas, rākṣasas, and birds.

263 His face was like a lump
of freshly-mined coal.
Even the gods did not dare
so much as look at him.
Brahmā's boon had made him proud.
But Rāma,

264 For the sake of the three worlds,
slew mahā-bodied, mahā-powerful Rāvaṇa
along with his ministers
and his entire family.
Having killed Rāvaṇa
and all his followers,

265 Rāma took steps
to ensure the stability
of the kingdom of Laṅkā
by placing the Indra-among-rākṣasas
Vibhīṣaṇa on the throne,
and granting him immortality.

266 Then, O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
taking Sītā with him in his air-chariot
called Puṣpaka,
Rāma, with his followers,
returned to his capital
and established Dharma-rājya.

267 In those days there ruled
in Mathurā the Dāvava anti-god
Madhu's son, Lavaṇa.
Under instructions from Rāma,
Śatrughna challenged
and slaughtered Lavaṇa.

268 Always seeking the welfare
of his subjects,
Rāma continued to rule.
Finest-of-dharma-followers Rāma
was devoted to the care
and protection of his people.

269 He organised and performed
ten Horse-Sacrifices.
He removed all obstacles
to the prosperity
of the territory of Jārudhi
on the banks of the Sarayū.

270 Not one complaint of high-
handedness or injustice
was heard of in the reign
of Rāma. No untimely deaths
were known; theft and robbery
were non-existent.

271 There was no fear
from floods, and no fear
of destruction by fire.
No widows lamented,
for no wives were left
ever husbandless.

272 In the reign of Rāma,
the entire world was
at peace. Intermarriage
between castes was unknown.
No owner paid taxes
on uncultivable land.

273 No occasion arose for elders
to perform funeral rites
for children.
Vaiśyas served the Kṣatriyas,
and Kṣatriyas never harmed the Vaiśyas.
Husbands did not neglect

274 Their wives. The harvests
were bountiful. People
lived hundreds of years, happily,
with hundreds of progeny.
Disease and pestilence
were unknown in Rāma's reign.

275 Gods, ṛṣis and humans
lived in harmony
in the reign of Rāma.
Never was any conflict
known to rise
among his subjects.

276 In the reign of Rāma,
people naturally undertook
practice of tapasyā,
they naturally followed
the dictates of dharma
in their everyday lives.

277 No one indulged
in activities that violated
the precepts of dharma.
Their inner *prāṇa* and outer *apāna*
breaths operated
in perfect unison.

278 Those who are learned
in the lore of the past
chant these praises:
“Ramā’s skin is cloud-blue,
his eyes reddish-pink,
he is elephant-strong.

279 His arms reach his knees,
his neck is leonine,
his face handsome.”
He ruled this earth
for eleven thousand years
in peace and prosperity.

280 Throughout the kingdom
could be heard only
“Rāma Rāma Rāma”.
In Rāma-Rājya, the twice-born
knew the Ṛg, Yajur,
and Sāma-Vedas.

281 From Daṇḍakāranya forest,
Rāma ruled his subjects
and fulfilled the wishes
of the gods. He killed Rāvaṇa,
oppressor of the gods,
gandharvas, and nāgas.

282 Enhances of the glory of the Ikṣvāku clan,
Rāma, the mighty-armed,
was the repository
of all virtues, a great hero,
shining in the radiance
of his own effulgence.

283 And when his rule ended,
slayer-of-Rāvaṇa Rāma
went to the celestial regions.
This is a brief account
of the earth-appearance
as Daśaratha's mahā-ātmaned son.

284 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! In the twenty-eighth
Dvāpara-yuga was born Krishna,
giving courage to the fear-stricken;
mahā-powerful Krishna,
adorned with the auspicious
Śrivatsa symbol.

285 Most respectworthy,
most handsome, most compassionate,
most mind-gifted,
most age-spirit-knowing,
armed with conch and cakra,
mace and sword.

286 He was known as Vāsudeva.
He devoted himself
to the welfare of others.
He took his birth
among the Vṛṣṇis in order
to make the earth prosper.

287 He alone makes people fearless,
he is famed
as the slayer of Madhu.
He undertook the killing
of the anti-gods Śakaṭa,
Yamalārjuna, and the rākṣasī Pūtanā.

288 This mahātmā killed in battle
Kaṁsa and other anti-gods
disguised as humans.
For the redemption and prosperity
of the world
he appeared on earth.

289 At the end of the Kaliyuga,
when dharma declines,
Hari-Viṣṇu, to punish
evil-doers and re-establish
the reign of dharma,
to restore the glory

290 Of the twice-born,
will take birth in this world.
The name of this appearance
who will destroy the wicked,
O bull-brave Yudhiṣṭhira,
will be Kalki Viṣṇu-yaśā.

291 There are other appearances
of the gods, and these
are described in the Purāṇas.
Those who are steeped
in Brahma-wisdom
know about these comings."

292 The Paurava descendant Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
Kuntī's son, listened attentively
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and said:

293 "Most eloquent of speakers!
I would like to know in detail
about the birth of illustrious Upendra-Viṣṇu
among the Vṛṣṇis.

294 Revered elder, Pitāmaha, tell me all
that you know about mahā-intelligent
Bhagavān Janārdana's birth
in the race of Madhu.

295 What made the bull-brave, mahā-energetic,
large-eyed guardian of the worlds
kill Kaṁsa
and protect the cows?

296 Pitāmaha! Wisest of men!
What were-Govinda-Krishna's sports
as a little boy?
Tell me everything."

297 Bhīṣma replied: Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira!
I will now narrate the story
of Nārāyaṇa's birth
among the Vṛṣṇis.

298 O bull-brave Bharata,
foe-less Ajātaśatru Yudhiṣṭhira!
Listen carefully
while I narrate it.

299 At the time of Janārdana-Krishna's birth,
waves rose up in joy,
hills shook, and ashy embers
flickered into flame.

300 Soft, cool, fragrant breezes
began blowing at Janārdana-Krishna's birth;
the earth's dust settled,
the planets shone brightly.

301 The gods sounded
their *dundubhi*-kettledrums and,
one by one, showered flowers
on the child.

302 Auspicious praises were chanted.
The maharṣis,
getting news of the appearance,
hurried to revere Madhusūdana-Krishna.

303 In the presence of Nārada
and other divine ṛṣis
the gandharvas and apsarās
began singing and dancing.

304 Thousand-eyed Indra,
Śacī's husband, came there
to serve Govinda-Krishna.
He said respectfully to the gods:

305 "You, O gods, are the world's lords.
Fulfil your duties
for the world's good,
and return to heaven."
Saying this, the lord of the three worlds Indra
also went back to heaven.

306 "O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira! Fearing Kaṁsa's wrath,
Vasudeva hid
his sun-shining baby
in the house of the cowherd Nanda.

307 For many years Krishna remained
with Nanda the cowherd.
One day
his foster-mother Yaśodā
left him asleep under a cow-cart
and went to the Yamunā.

308 The baby Krishna began waving
his arms and legs,
as babies do.
As he kicked one leg,

309 A toe grazed the cow-cart,
which clattered away
under the impact,
which was tremendous.

310 He rolled over on his stomach,
and began wailing
for his mother. The cart overturned,
and all its clay pots shattered.
The people marvelled.

311 The Śūrasena dwellers of Mathurā
were wonder-struck.
Even more wonderful was the way
Vāsudeva-Krishna, while the gods watched,
sucked the life out of huge-bodied
and huge-breasted Pūtanā.

312 Saṁkarṣaṇa-Balarāma and the baby
Keśava-Krishna, two divine brothers,
crawled happily about
on all fours.

313 Like the sun and moon
lighting up the sky,
were Balarāma and Krishna.
They had snake-skin-lovely arms.

314 Their bodies, covered with dust,
glowed beautifully.
Crawling calloused
their hand and knee joints.
They would often steal pots of curd
and enjoy themselves.

315 One day the boy Govinda-Krishna
was secretly lapping up
a bowl of buttermilk
when some gopīs spotted him.

316 Yaśodā and the gopis
tied him to the pestle
with a strong rope.
He wedged the pestle between

317 Two trees and uprooted them,
and freed himself.
Two mahā-bodied anti-gods living in the trees
were crushed to death.

318 Saṁkarṣaṇa-Balarāma and Krishna
grew up in Vraja
in this way till they reached
the age of seven.

319 Balarāma wore blue,
  Krishṇa a saffron dress.
Both had flowing long hair.
  Both tended calves.

320 Both were irresistibly handsome.
  Both rolled leaf-whistles
and played with them,
  like two nāga-boys.

321 Peacock-feathers in their ears;
  flowers in their hair;
garlands round their necks –
  they looked like fresh leaves
sprouting on a śāla tree.

322 Sometimes they wore crowns
  of lotuses;
cow-ropes became their sacred threads;
  with rope-swings and gourd-pots
they roamed,
  fluting in the forest.

323 Resting briefly,
  teasing each other,
dozing off on leaf-beds,
  the two brothers passed their time.

324 Protectors of cattle,
  they lent lustre to the forest
with their varied
  sports and games.

325 Both sons of Vasudeva
  lived in this manner
in Vṛndāvana-forest, tending cattle and playing games.
  (continued Bhīṣma).

326 Once, splendid-figured,
  handsome Krishna,
leaving his elder brother Balarāma behind,
  wandered off by himself.

327 With crow's-wing side-locks,
cloud-blue complexion,
lotus-large eyes, he shone moon-like
wherever he went with his Śrīvatsa mark.

328 He wore a string
as his sacred thread;
he was dressed in saffron;
white sandal-paste on his body;

329 Black curling locks of hair;
a crown of peacock feathers,
which waved
with the slightest breeze;
he sang, he danced,
he played, he laughed.

330 Melodying on his flute
and singing,
Krishna charmed the cows
as he roamed in the forest.

331 During the rainy season,
entrancing Krishna
spent his days in Gokula,
delighting all.

332 Nothing delighted him more,
O bull-brave Yudhiṣṭhira,
nothing delighted the forest-dwellers
more than Krishna's sports.
One day
he was tending the cows,

333 And, feeling tired,
he thought of lying down
and relaxing under a banyan
called Bhāṇḍīra.

334 O defectless Yudhiṣṭhira! Krishna behaved exactly
as other cowherd-boys did,
singing, dancing and playing
with innocent abandon.

335 And the milkmen of Bhāṇḍīra
brought Krishna toys
to play with;
others composed songs about him.

336 And Krishna would accompany them
on gourd-pot,
flute, and leaf-whistle;
and all were happy.

337 It was during this time
that the boy Krishna,
solicitous for everyone's welfare,
performed remarkable feats.

338 In the *kadamba*-grove of Vṛndāvana
was a pond;
entering this, Krishna danced
on the head of Kāliya

339 The gigantic snake, after which
he ordered Kāliya,
in everyone's presence, to go eleswhere.
In the palm-grove

340 Lived an anti-god called Dhenuka,
in the shape of an ass.
Baladeva-Balarāma undertook
to kill Dhenuka.

341 Once Krishna and Balarāma
set out to graze
their cattle in their now
expanded forest-area.

342 The forest exhilarated them:
both brothers
were intoxicated by its beauty,
and enjoyed themselves.

343 Nothing to do for these
foe-smiting heroes
except round up the cows,
calling each by name.

344 For though their birth was divine,
these god-adored brothers
lived as humans, and spent their days
even as humans do.

345 Once mahā-energetic Krishna went to where
the cowherds were performing
the Mountain-Yajña,
mixed with them, and,
revealing himself as the All-Creating Lord.
he tasted the milk-sweet *pāyasa.*

346 Seeing him, all the cowherds
offered him pūjā.
And Krishna dazzled them
with his divine form.

347 To save the cattle from flooding rain,
Vāsudeva-Krishna for seven days
lifted Govardhana mountain
in the palm of one hand.

348 Krishna would often perform
similar incredible feats,
almost playfully,
and the cowherds were astounded.

349 When the god-of-gods Indra saw Krishna
lift Govardhana,
he was overjoyed.
He gave him a new name: Govinda.
He embraced Krishna
and returned to heaven.

350 Krishna, to protect his cattle,
killed a fierce Daitya anti-god
named Ariṣṭa,
who assumed a bull's shape.

351 In Vraja lived
a horse-shaped Daitya
with the strength of ten thousand elephants,
a follower of Kaṁsa.

352 Puruṣottama-Krishna slew the equine anti-god.
In Kaṁṣa's court
was a mahā-antigod Chāṇūra, an Āndhra wrestler,
whom also Krishna killed.

353 Kaṁsa's commander-in-chief was his brother,
the great general named Sunāma.
The boy Govinda-Krishna
succeeded in killing him.

354 It was Baladeva-Balārama who slew
the wrestler named Muṣṭika.
Mere mention of Krishna's name
struck terror in Kaṁsa.

355 Even as Kaṁsa watched,
Krishna killed the huge elephant
called Kuvalayāpīḍa,
born in Airāvata's race.

356 Finally Krishna killed Kaṁsa
in the presence of all.
He installed Ugrasena king,
and received his parents' blessings.

357 Countless indeed were Janārdana-Krishna's
unbelievable feats
while he passed his days
with Halāyadha-Balārama in Mathurā.

358 He and Balarāma then went
to the guru Sāndīpani to receive instruction.
They were assiduous
in their pursuit of dharma.

359 Strict were the vows the mahā-ātmaned brothers
observed. In sixty-four days
they mastered the six branches of learning,
including the Vedas.

360 More: the two Yadu brothers
picked up the essentials of painting,
mathematics, song and dance,
and medicine.

361 They took twelve days to learn
elephant-craft and horsemanship.
Then they turned their minds
to archery.

362 They touched the feet of the guru of bowcraft,
Sāndīpani,
who accepted them as his pupils
in Avantī.

363 In fifty days they learnt
all there was to know
about the ten branches
of the science of archery.

364 Seeing them proficient in their studies,
Sāndīpani allowed them
to offer tribute to him.
He said:

365 "My son, while bathing,
was swallowed by a *timi*-monster.
I would like my son
restored to life."

366 Son-sorrow overpowered him.
What none in the three worlds
dared to accomplish,
Krishna agreed to do.

367 Both the brothers fought
the water anti-god
who had swallowed Sāndīpani's son,
and killed the anti-god.

368 And, through the grace of Krishna,
Sāndīpani's son,
long dead, was revived
and restored to his father.

369 Seeing the impossible made possible,
all the people marvelled
and were delighted
(Bhīṣma continued).

370 Keśava-Krishna and Balarāma
presented wealth, cows and horses
to their guru,
along with the guru's revived son.

371 This deed convinced the people
that what was impossible for others
was perfectly possible
for Krishna.
Who but Nārāyaṇa could even conceive
of such a deed?

372 In mace and spear-duel,
and in other war-combats,
Keśava-Krishna excelled.
His fame soon spread far and wide.

373 Kaṁsa too, O Yudhiṣṭhira,
was expert in all war-weapons;
his skill was no less
than Kārtavīrya's.

374 The kings of this earth
feared Kaṁsa of the Bhojas
as snakes fear the great bird-deity
Garuḍa.

375 The rājā of Bhoja Kaṁsa had an army
of one crore foot-soldiers,
armed with bows, swords, spears,
and other weapons.

376 His chariot-warriors
in their gold-washed vehicles,
who never turned their backs to the foe,
numbered six hundred thousand.

377 He had eight hundred thousand
never-back-turning elephant-warriors,
rid g in golden,
·littering enclosures.

378 Anc is special division
· swift she-elephants,
sple lly caparisoned,
was roughly double that number.

379 He had sixteen thousand cavalry,
each horse
like a flame-of-the-forest;
another cavalry contingent

380 Consisted only of young horses,
numbering sixteen thousand,
unbeaten on the battlefield.
The commander was Sunāma,
as known for prowess as Kaṁsa,
and ready to die for him.

381 A third cavalry unit, Miśraka,
consisted of horses of all colours.
Report put their number
at sixty thousand.

382 Like a foaming river, was Kaṁsa's wrath;
his banners like its tall trees;
war-elephants like its mahā-crocodiles;
a river flowing at the command of Vaivasvata-Yama.

383 The various war-weapons
were its tossing waves;
cavalry like its currents,
maces and swords its fish;

384 Chariots its whirling eddies,
blood its mud-and-slush,
bows like its wave-crests,
horses its roaring noise.

385 The frenzied cries of battling soldiers
its cacophony.
O Yudhiṣṭhira! Who but Nārāyaṇa
could think of killing Kaṁsa?

386 Like the wind tearing clouds
into tatters,
Krishna, seated in Indra's chariot,
attacked and routed Kaṁsa's army.

387 He slew Kaṁsa and his ministers
in the royal court,
and immediately went
and paid his respects to Devakī.

388 Janārdana-Krishna honoured, repeatedly,
Yaśodā and Rohiṇī,
and installed Ugrasena king.
All the Yadus praised Krishna.

389 After this, Puruṣottama-Krishna
attacked all-defying Jarāsaṁdha
and defeated him
near the lake-studded Yamunā.

390 Pleaser-of-the-Yadavas
Bhagavān Krishna then left
Mathurā of Śūrasena
and went to Dvārakā.

391 All the gold and gems
that lotus-eyed Krishna
had won from the anti-gods,
he lavished on Dvārakā.

392 The Daityas and Dānavas
opposed his plans.
Incensed, Krishna slaughtered
hundreds of the mahā-antigods.

393 It was at this time that the anti-god Naraka,
of whom you know,
whom all the gods feared,
obstructed Krishna.

394 Destroyer of gods and antī-gods Naraka
had taken possession of all
the earth's recesses where sacred images
and liṅgas were worshipped.

395 Because he was Earth's son,
Naraka was called Earth-Born.
Assuming an elephant's shape,
he abducted the ravishingly lovely,
fourteen-year-old Kaśeru.
daughter of Prajāpati Tvaṣṭā.

396 Nāraka was king of Prāg-jyotiṣa –
a fearless, feelingless ruler.
Taking Kaśeru to his palace,
he said:

397 "All the gems of all the world's kings,
all the gems
that are buried in the earth,
all the gems of the oceans –

398 Devī, these will all be yours from today,
brought for you by rākṣasas
on my orders,
and by Daityas and Dānavas."

399 The earth-born anti-god
made lavish presents of wealth
in this fashion
to her (continued Bhīṣma).

400 He abducted the daughters
of the gandharvas as well;
also the daughters of gods and men,
and bewitching apsarās.

401 Sixteen thousand and one virgins
were brought to his palace.
According to the virtuous custom,
they kept single braids of hair.

402 Naraka made arrangements for their stay
in a place
called Audaka in Antaḥpura,
in the anti-god Mura's territory.

403 Earth-born Rājā Naraka of Prāg-jyotiṣa
and the ten sons of Mura
guarded Antaḥpura
day and night.

404 O Yudhiṣṭhira! So great was Nāraka's self-conceit
over the boon granted for his tapasyā
that he even dared to insult Aditi
over the matter of an ear-ring.

405 Never in the past
had all the Daityas together
offered such gross insult
as now did Naraka.

406 He was born of Mother Earth,
his capital was Prāgjyotiṣa,
four battle-proud Daityas
protected his kingdom.

407 They blocked all approaches
from earth and heaven.
Their rākṣasa-looks struck terror
even among the gods.

408 They were called Hayagrīva,
Ṇiśumbha, terrible Pañcajana
and the hundred-sonned,
boon-accomplished mahā-antigod Mura.

409 It was to kill them that Janārdana-Krishna
of the mace, cakra and sword
was born
to Devakī and Vasudeva.

410 His glory illuminated the three worlds.
And of course
all here know that Indra-among-men Krishna
lived in the city of Dvārakā,

411 A city even more entrancing
than Vāsava-Indra's Amarāvatī,
a city to shame all others,
which of course you know.

412 In Dvārakā is a famous spot
called Dāśārhī
where the Vṛṣṇis would congregate –
it is one yojana square.

413 Balarāma and Krishna
and other Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas
used to meet here and plan
for the protection of the world.

414 It so happened once,
when they were gathered,
a divine wind began blowing,
divine fragrance drifted down.

415 Suddenly a mahā-wondrous light
like that of a thousand suns
approached the earth slowly
and stopped near the assembly.

416 In the dazzling brightness
could be seen Vāsava-Indra
on his elephant,
surrounded by his hosts of gods.

417 Balarāma, Krishna, Ugrasena,
the Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis
all rose, came out,
and namaskāra-ed the god Indra.

418 Indra alighted from his elephant,
and warmly embraced,
first Kṛishna,
then Balarāma and the other rājās,

419 Among them Vasudeva,
Uddhava, mahā-intelligent Vikadru,
Pradyumna, Sāmba, Niśaṭha,
Aniruddha, Sātyaki,

420 Gada, Sāraṇa, Akrūra,
Kṛtavarman, Cārudeṣṇa, Sudeṣṇa.
All the Yādavas
received Indra's blessings.

421 When the chiefs
of the Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis
had been greeted in this fashion,
Vāsava-Indra received their pūja;
then, head slightly bowed,
he said:

422 "I come here, O Krishna,
at the instance of your mother Aditi.
The anti-god Naraka
has stolen her ear-rings.

423 Who but you will redress her insult?
O Madhusūdana-Krishna,
maha-fortune-favoured lord of men,
go and kill Naraka."

424 Mahā-muscled Janārdana-Krishna, greatly pleased,
replied, "I will go,
defeat Naraka, and bring back
my mother's ear-rings."

425 He consulted Balarāma;
and also gathered advice
from Pradyumna, Aniruddha,
and brave Sāmba.

426 Then, picking up
his conch, cakra, mace and sword,
mahā-illustrious Krishna mounted
the bird-deity Suparṇa-Garuḍa;
Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna flew away,
keeping the welfare of the gods in mind.

427 Seeing foe-destroying-Acyuta-Krishna
go on his mission, Purandara-Indra
aad the other gods were delighted,
and followed him.

428 Krishna killed the chief rākṣasas
of the mahā-antigod Nāraka and spotted
the six thousand deadly knife-edged nets
prepared by Mura.

429 His weapon the cakra sliced through them,
and decapitated Mura and his followers;
whizzing over stone walls,
it killed Niśumbha.

430 Next, it slew mahā-valiant, mahā-powerful Hayagrīva
who could singlehanded
fight a thousand soldiers,
who singlehanded defied the gods.

431 Delighter of-the-hearts-
of-the-Yadāvas,
the radiantly lustrous
heroic bhagavān son of Devakī

432 Penetrated the steel fort of Audakā,
and killed
the five fierce mahā-antigods
appointed by Nāraka to guard it.

433 From a distance he saw
the shining roofs of Prāgjyotiṣa.
He fought a battle
with the Dānavas there,

434 Celebrated, O bull-brave Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira
as the mahā god-antigod war.
It is said that no battle equalled it
in ferocity.

435 Krishna's cakra sliced through the Dānava ranks,
decimating them;
his heroism with his śakti-spear and sword
did the rest.

436 Eight hundred thousand Dānavas
fell in that clash.
Lion-among-men Puruṣottama-Krishna
hurried to the lower regions

437 Of Pātāla, where the challenger-of-the-gods
Naraka lay hiding;
the slayer-of-Madhu Madhusūdana-Krishna
immediately attacked Naraka.

438 The carnage that resulted over the ear-rings
of World-Mother Aditi
is impossible to describe,
O Bharata-descendant Yudhiṣṭhira.

439 For a little while, cakra-wielding
Madhusūdana-Krishna as it were
played with Naraka, then sliced his head
with one throw.

440 Shredded by the cakra,
Naraka's mutilated body,
like Vṛtra's killed by Indra's thunderbolt,
thudded on the ground.

441 Earth, seeing her son lifeless,
returned Aditi's ear-rings,
and said
to mahā-muscled Krishna:

442 "You gave him to me, my lord,
you now have taken him.
Play with me as you wish.
Only spare his children."

443 Śrī Bhagavān Krishna replied,
"Your son had become a terror
to gods, munis, pitṛs, mahātmās,
and others.
He persecuted the gods and Brahmins.
People loathed him.

444 He went so far in his pride as to insult
even the revered World-Mother Aditi
by snatching her earrings.
So I killed him.

445 Lovely lady, do not hate me
for what I have done.
Fortune-favoured one,
your son is lucky to have met death
at my hands. Go now.
Your burden has been lightened."

446 After killing Naraka (continued Bhīṣma),
Krishna, with his wife Satyabhāmā,
accompanied by the guardians of the universe,
went to Naraka's palace.

447 Naraka's palace
was a fabulous treasure-house
of all varieties of precious stones
and other wealth –

448 Pearls, diamonds, rubies,
cat's-eyes, gems embroidered in clothes,
topazes, jaspers,
and quartz-studded dresses;

449 Various other dresses
made from gold-thread
obtained from the Jāmbū river,
shining like white-silk moonlight.

450 The inner apartments of the palace
were made of gold.
The hoard of wealth
that one saw there

451 Excelled the riches in the palace
of Kubera, god of treasures,
and the riches
of Mahendra-Indra's palace in heaven.

452 Indra said, "Krishna,
all this wealth you see,
the gems, gold, the gold-woven cloths,
the elephant-seats,

453 The multi-coloured dresses –
all this is yours.
There are twenty thousand elephants
and forty thousand she-elephants;

454 Eight hundred thousand of the finest horses,
and many vehicles
pulled by yoked bulls. Whatever you need,
belongs to you, Janārdana-Krishna

455 These woollens, beds,
seats, lovely trained birds,
sandalwood and aloe-wood
perfumed chariots –

456 If you order me, O foe-chastising Krishna,
I will arrange to send them
all to Dvārakā
for your and the Vṛṣṇis' comfort."

457 All the magnificent wealth
of the gods, gandharvas,
anti-gods and Daityas was loaded
on Garuḍa's back,

458 And Vāsava-Indra,
along with Krishna of the Dāśārhas,
went to the mountain
known as Maṇiparvata.

459 Soft, cool breezes blew;
scenes of enchanting beauty
refreshed one's eyes.
The gods saw, and marvelled.

460 The shining deities of the sky,
the ṛṣis,
the sun and moon came there
and all were awe-struck.

461 Then, on a signal
from Vāsava-Indra and Balarāma,
Keśava-Krishna set foot inside
Nāraka's mountain stronghold.

462 Madhusūdana-Krishna saw the doors
of the stronghold flashing like sapphires.
Flags fluttered
on all the city-gates.

463 Dazzling with golden light,
glowing with coloured flags,
Maṇiparvata looked like a painting
against the clouds.

464 The upper room were large-sized,
the stairs were gem-encrusted.
The bewitching
young daughters

465 Of gandharvas and anti-gods
stood on the balconies
of that heaven and saw
invincible Madhusūdana-Krishna.

466 They saw him, and, next instant,
surrounded the mahā-muscled hero.
Each had a single braid, each wore saffron,
each was self-controlled.

467 Their vow of self-restraint in no way
caused them discomfort;
they stood in front of Krishna
with palms folded in *añjali*;

468 The lovely lotus-eyed ladies
said to the Yādava-lion
Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna,
lord of all their senses:

469 "Puruṣottama-Krishna,
the royal ṛṣi Nārada said to us,
'Govinda-Krishna will come here
to fulfil his mission

470 Of helping the gods.
He will kill the anti-god Nāraka,
Niśumbha, Mura, Hayagrīva, and Pañcajana,
and take their possessions.

471 In a few days he will be here
to free you
from your suffering.'
Saying this, wise devarṣi Nārada left us.

472 We have been doing severe tapasyā
in expectation of your coming.
Oh, we have waited
long for your appearance, Mādhava-Krishna.

473 And our thoughts were always
that you should triumph
over the Dānavas.
Such was our tapasyā, O finest of men.

474 Marry us by gāndharva rites,
and make us happy.
The wind-god Māruta knew our desire
and told us,
'All that Nārada has predicted,
will happen.'"

475 The gods and gandharvas saw
large-eyed Krishna standing
among the enchanting girls,
as a bull stands among cows.

476 They saw his moon-lovely face,
and were filled with love-longing;
passionately,
they said to him:

477 "It seems unbelievable
that what the wind-god Vāyu said
and what mahā-ṛṣi Nārada predicted,
should come true.

478 Nārada told us, 'Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa will come
with conch, cakra, mace and sword,
kill Naraka,
and become your husband.'

479 Your darśana today has fulfilled
mahā-ātmaned Nārada's prediction –
oh how auspicious a day
for us!

480 So we stand here and gaze
on your moon-lovely face.
Your darśana alone
has made us happy."

481 Love for Krishna blossomed
in their hearts (Bhīṣma continued).
Krishna, finest of the Yādavas,
replied:

482 "Lovely large-eyed ladies!
It will be as you say.
All your desires
will be fulfilled today."

483 Krishna ordered his followers
to take the wealth and girls
to Dvārakā
(continued Bhīṣma).

484 Then Devakī's son Krishna instructed
the giant bird-deity Vinatā's son Garuḍa
to lift the glittering hill
on his back.

485 With all its flocks of birds,
herds of elephants,
snakes, deer, nāgas, monkeys,
stones and rocks;

486 Antelopes, boars, *ruru*-deer,
waterfalls, jutting ledges,
and crowds of brilliant-feathered,
dazzling peacocks.

487 Even as all the creatures watched, dazed,
Mahendra-Indra's younger brother Krishna
lifted up the hill and placed it
on Garuḍa's back.

488 And mahā-powerful Garuḍa winged across
the sky with his load,
carrying Upendra-Krishna, Baladeva-Balārama,
and mahā-powerful Vāsava-Indra,
carrying the nectarine ocean of Varuṇa,
the moon-white umbrella of clouds.

489 His gigantic body
was like a huge mountain peak.
His massive wings spread waves of noise
as he flew.

490 Hills brushed by his wings
toppled and fell, trees snapped,
and clouds were dispersed
on impact.

491 Obscuring with his brightness the stars and planets,
he reached the skyey paths of the sun and the moon.

492 Reaching the central summit
of Meru mountain,
Madhusūdana-Krishna surveyed the abode
of all the gods.

493 There he saw the Viśva-devas,
Maruts, Sādhyas;
he visited the realms of the Aśvins;
then went to Indra's palace.

494 Nearing Śakra-Indra's palace,
Janārdana-Krishna alighted from Garuḍa.
He paid his respects to Aditi.
Brahmā, Dakṣa,
the Prajāpatis and the gods
welcomed him inside.

495 In the presence of Balarāma,
Keśava-Krishna handed over
the two earrings and other ornaments
to Aditi.

496 Aditi, pleased, threw off her gloom,
and warmly welcomed Vāsava-Indra's
younger brother Krishna of the Dāśārhas
and his elder brother Balarāma.

497 Indra's wife Śacī
took Krishna's consort Satyabhāmā
by the hand, and escorted her to Aditi
to be blessed.

498 Sorrow-bereft World-Mother Deva-mātā Aditi
was so pleased with Krishna
that she ordained a special boon
for Satyabhāmā.

499 "Sweet-faced wife," she said,
"you will not become old
so long as Krishna is in human form;
all the fragrances
and all the virtues of the world
will make you radiant."

500 Graceful-waisted Satyabhāmā roamed
with Śacī in the divine realm
and, with her permission,
retired to Krishna's rest-room.

501 Foe-annihilating Krishna
took leave of the gods and maharṣis,
and returned
to his capital Dvārakā.

502 Mahā-muscled Krishna covered the long distance
in no time, and arrived in the excellent city
of Dvārakā, whose principal gate
is known as Vardhamāna.

503 Hari-Krishna, multi-formed Nārāyaṇa,
was delighted with the beauty
of the city that he saw,
as he was about to enter.

504 On all sides, exquisite gardens,
with beautiful trees flourishing;
entrancing flowers,
and sweet fruits.

505 The royal buildings shone
like the sun and the moon;
so tall they looked
like Meru's cloud-kissing peaks.
Viśvakarman himself had supervised
Dvārakā's architecture.

506 Lotuses bloomed in the moats
surrounding the city;
swans floating on them made them resemble
the Gaṅgā and Sindhu.

507 Sun-bright, sky-touching,
tall-towered Dvārakā,
girt with white clouds,
looked like the city of the gods.

508 Its paradisial gardens
were like those of Nandana.
Its Caitraratha grove was like
Pitāmaha Brahmā's own pleasure-garden.

509 Like the Vaibhrāja garden,
it flowered perennially.
So glorious was Dvārakā –
like a celestial star-spangled city.

510 In the east of Dvārakā
was towering Raivataka hill,
whose peaks were enchanting
to behold.

511 In the south was the hill
known as Latāveṣṭa,
known as Rainbow-Hill
because of its five colours.

512 In the west was the hill
called Sukakṣa,
and from a distance one could see
brilliant-hued flowers on it.

513 And in the north, O bull-brave Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
there was the Venumanta hill,
as glorious and celebrated
as Mandara mountain.

514 From Raivataka hill could be seen
all the scenic loveliness
of the forests
of Pāñcajanya and Sarvartuka.

515 From Latāveṣṭa could be seen
the Meruprabha forests,
full of stately palms,
lotuses and other flowers.

516 All around Sukakṣa hill
were the mahā-forests
of Citrapuṣpa, Śatapatra, Karavīra,
and Kusumbhi.

517 From Veṇumanta one could see
the mahā-forests
of Caitraratha, Nandana, Ramaṇa,
and Bhāvana.

518 In the western part
of mahā-ātmaned Keśava -Krishna's lovely city
was a lake, Puṣkariṇī,
spread over a hundred bow-lengths.

519 Krishna was happy
to enter that magnificent city
of fifty gates
called Dvārakā –

520 So large, its exact dimensions
were unknown;
surrounded by rivers and lakes;
with tall, shining, white buildings.

521 A city well-fortified
with various sharp spear-like defences,
and fierce, gigantic
circular war machines.

522 Like the city of the gods it boasted,
outside its gates,
eight thousand chariots
with flags and pennants flying.

523 Its central area was roughly
eight yojanas wide
and twelve long.
Double that were its adjoining parts.

524 Eight main roads;
magnificent porches in all houses;
sixteen large crossroads –
a finely-planned city.

525 An intricate network
of bye-lanes radiating
from seven main roads –
all executed by Viśvakarman.

526 Its gold and gem-studded staircases
amazed all
who saw them. Everywhere,
at all times,
strains of sweet music issued
from its large-windowed houses.

527 When Bhagavān Pākaśāsana-Indra saw
this exchanting city
with its huge gates and porches,
he was struck with wonder.

528 Flags fluttered on the high buildings,
cloud-white against the sky
like the summits
of mount Meru.

529 The roofs were gold-washed,
the walls whitewashed;
the dome, grill-work and windows
were gem-encrusted.

530 From the eaves of the upper rooms
hung bird-cages.
Dvārakā had so much stone-and gem-work
that an observer
could mistake it
for a gem-glittering mountain.

531 Some houses were made of gold,
some of marble,
others of stone and brick,
the doors of Jāmbū-gold and blue stone.

532 The very feel of these houses
was soothing.
Their roofs, their rooms pleased
as does a beautiful mountain.

533 Five shades of the cassia were mixed
to get the wall-colours
of the rooms,
as subtle as the shades of clouds.

534 These houses tall as the peaks of Mahendra hill
stood as lovely as painted pictures
against the sky's backdrop,
rivalling the sun and the moon.

535 Like the Bhogavatī-Gaṅgā
awesome with its hosts of nāgas,
Dvārakā impressed with its crowds
of heroic citizens.

536 Like the sky enriched with clouds,
Dvārakā was enriched
by its houses;
Krishna was Dvārakā's Indra.
Its young Vṛṣṇi heroes strutted like peacocks,
its women were dazzle to their lightning.

537 Clouds draw their splendour
from Agni and the sun;
so Dvārakā basked in the effulgence
of Vāsudeva-Krishna.
The weapons of its defenders
were like Indra's rainbow.

538 Krishna's palaces,
which Viśvakarman built
with his own hands,
were four yojanas square.

539 So many houses and small apartments
within this area –
impossible to count them all!
It was visible
from all parts of the world,
such was its splendour.

540 The palace in which Padmanābha-Krishna lived
was one yojana square.
Golden its cupolas,
like Meru's summits.
It was built specially for Rukmiṇī
by Viśvakarman, on Vāsava-Indra's orders.

541 Krishna's second queen, Satyabhāmā,
lived in a white palace
with gem-studded staircases,
designed for cooling effect.

542 Soft pennants waved atop its turrets,
like the play
of lambent sunlight.
A lovely garden; multi-coloured flags.

543 Between these two palaces
of Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā
was that of Krishna's wife Jāmbavatī,
also constructed

544 By Viśvakarman, but decorated
by her taste and skill.
It shone with the lustre
associated with mount Kailāsa.

545 Whose main door glowed like gold
from the Jāmbunada;
altogether which shone
with the radiance of fire;

546 Whose vastness one could compare
only with the ocean's –
that palace Krishna reserved for Sukeśī,
daughter of the rājā of Gāndhāra.

547 O mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira!
The palace famed as Padmakūṭa,
soft and delicate as a lotus,
was kept for queen Suprabhā.

548 The palace which excelled
the radiance of the sun
was intended by Śārṅga-bow-wielding Krishna
for queen Lakṣmaṇā.

549 The palace of lapis lazuli,
seeing which people thought,
"This is Vasudeva-Krishna's own blue!"
was for Mitravindā.

550 It is guarded by the gods themselves.
Its beauty lay
in its blend
of various architectural styles.

551 Another magnificent palace in Dvārakā
was built
by skilled artisans;
it is a smiling palace, known

552 As Ketumān, the pride of the artisans;
it is intended
for Vāsudeva-Krishna's queen
named Sudattā.

553 Another palace called Viraja
is well-known in Dvārakā;
it has no asymmetry; it is Keśava-Krishna's
favourite resting-place.

554 Still another palace,
the work of Viśvakarman,
is one yojana square,
built entirely of precious stones.

555 And the flags and pennants
that flutter on these palaces
have staffs hewn
from solid gold.

556 All houses in Dvārakā have bells.
The lion-of-the-Yādavas Krishna
personally planted Vaijayantī flags
on the surrounding hills.

557 Near Dvārakā
is the Haṁsakūṭa hill,
sixty palm-trees tall,
one yojana in width.
Also in Dvārakā
is the large lake Indradyumna.

558 The Kinnaras sing there
for everyone's delight.
Infinitely illustrious Krishna's capital
is the talk of the three worlds.

559 The sun-touching, tallest three-worlds-famed peak
of Meru mountain
seems to have been brought
with great difficulty,

560 By Krishna to Dvārakā.
All the healing herbs
that grew on Meru
grow in Dvārakā's precincts.

561 And the *pārijāta*-tree
which foe-crushing Keśava-Krishna removed
from the palace of Indra
is planted in Dvārakā.

562 Vāsudeva-Krishna brought many trees
from Brahmā's world too:
śāla, palm, *aśva-karṇa*,
hundred-branching banyan;

563 Marking-nut, benzoin, campher,
champak, date-palm,
fragrant pandanus.
All these he planted in Dvārakā.

564 Lakes filled with crystal water,
brimming with pink lotuses,
glittering from a distance
like pearls –
on all sides the lakes
are verdant with tall trees.

565 Lion-of-the-Yādavas Krishna brought trees
from the Himālayas
and from the Nandana groves
specially for Dvārakā.

566 Some red, some pink,
some pale yellow, some white-flowering;
many trees in Dvārakā
blossomed all the year round.

567 Thousands of lotuses, *mandāras,*
aśokas, *karṇikāras,*
tilakas, and the flowers known
as *nāga-mallikās;*

568 Pepper, *nāgapuṣpa*, champak,
soft grass, myrobalan,
the seven-leafed tree, *kadamba*,
nīpa, *kurabaka*;

569 *Ketakī*, *keśara,* the marshy date tree,
palm, *tāṭaka,*
fan-palm, saffron, *vakula,*
incense tree, citrus tree;

570 Grape-vine, *amala*, wild date,
black currant, plum,
mango, jack fruit, *aṅkola*,
sesamum, *tinduka*;

571 Litchi, hog-plum, *kṣīraka,*
berry, coconut,
iṅguda, and the tree known
as *utkrośakavana;*

572 Also the plantain, jasmine,
mallikā, trumpet-flower,
cashew-nut, wood-apple, *taintabha,*
and *bandhujīva*;

573 Red sandalwood, aśoka,
kāsmarī, and old trees;
the *priyaṅgu*-creeper, black berry;
barley, *spandana*, sandalwood;

574 *Śamī*, the bilva-plant, flame-of-the-forest,
pāṭala-rice,
pipal, wild fig, *dvidala*,
pālāśa, the coral tree;

575 Indra's tree, Arjuna's tree,
the giant banyan, *ciribilva*,
saubhañjana, bhallaṭa,
and the horse-flower;

576 The ichneumon plant, betel,
clove,, areca-nut,
many kinds of bamboo –
all these beautified Krishna's Dvārakā.

577 Lord-of-the-Yādavas Krishna brought all varieties
of trees from Nandana
and the gardens of Caitraratha,
and placed them in Dvārakā.

578 In Krishna's palace were thousands
of lotus-filled bathing pools,
many wells, fountains, and tanks
with pink sand and clear water.

579 Also, flowing artificial rivulets
bubbling with laughing fresh water,
shaded on both sides
by overhanging trees.

580 From its gardens
gem-glinting, pebbled, pink-sandy
water-channels flowed,
delighting the peacocks and kokilas.

581 In the hills of Dvārakā
roam cattle and elephants;
swine, deer, and birds
haunt their jungles,

582 And the ranges of hills
are so employed by Viśvakarman
that they act
as natural defences and gates,
which are a hundred arm's-lengths tall,
and white like moonlight.

583 Outside the four natural gates
are the magnificent mountains,
rivers, and lakes
girdling Krishna's palace.

584 Entering the marvellous city
created by Viśvakarman's imagination,
Govinda-Krishna gazed
right and left.
Indra and the gods also
looked admiringly on all sides.

585 This gives some idea
of how the glory of Dvārakā
struck Upendra-Krishna, Baladeva-Balarāma,
and mahā-illustrious Vāsava-Indra.

586 From his seat on Garutmat-Garuḍa's back,
Śauri-Krishna joyfully blew
his horripilating, white conch
called the Pāñcājanya.

587 The ocean-waves
rose agitatedly,
the skies reverberated deafeningly.
The noise was awesome.

588 Hearing the peal of the Pāñcajanya
and seeing Garuḍa,
the Kukuras and Andhakas
were stupefied.

589 Seated on Suparṇa-Garuḍa's back,
in Krishna's hands
were conch, mace, cakra, and other weapons.
Horripilating was his sun-like radiance.

590 Trumpets blared, kettledrums sounded,
scattering noise everywhere.
And all the people
broke into shouts of praise.

591 All the Dāśārhas, Kukuras and Andhakas,
seeing Madhusūdana-Krishna,
made preparations
to welcome him.

592 Rājā Ugrasena led Vāsudeva-Krishna
to his palace,
to the accompaniment
of auspicious flutes and conches.

593 Devakī, Rohiṇī and the wives
of Ugrasena
emerged from their palaces
to receive Krishna.

594 They said, "All the Brahmin-hating anti-gods
have been crushed,
all enemies of the Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis defeated,"
and they looked at Madhusūdana-Krishna.

595 Śauri-Krishna was taken by Suparṇa-Garuḍa
to his palace.
There Iśvara-Krishna placed
the huge hill of gems.

596 Lotus-eyed Madhusūdana-Krishna offered wealth
and precious stones to the sabhā,
and in his mind
he longingly thought of his father.

597 Large-and-pink eyed, mahā-illustrious
and mahā-muscled Krishna, in his mind,
took the dust
of his guru Sāndīpani's feet

598 With his brother Balarāma, Vāsava-Indra's
younger brother Krishna went to touch the feet
of his father, Vasudeva.
Vasudeva's eyes filled with uncontrollable tears.
All the Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas
embraced Krishna and Balarāma.

599 Krishna divided the treasures
he had brought equally,
and said to the Vṛṣṇis,
"These are for you."

600 Since Sātvata-Krishna, Dāśārha-Adhokṣaja Krishna,
was also one of the Yadavas,
he called each Yādava by name,
embraced him,

601 And, dividing wealth equally
as he did for the Vṛṣṇis,
the delighter of the Yādavas said,
"This wealth is my gift for you."

602 The pride of a mountain
are its lions;
the pride of Dvārakā were lions-among-men
Keśava-Krishna, Mahendra-Indra, and the Vṛṣṇis.

603 When all the Yadavas had taken their seats,
mahā-illustrious Indra
made the following statement to rājā Ugrasena,
and the Kukuras and Andhakas:

604 "Let me tell you, O Yādavas,
of mahā-ātmaned Krishna's birth
among humans and Vāsudeva-Krishna's
wonderful accomplishments till now.

605 Foe-destroying lotus-eyed Krishna,
killing one hundred thousand Dānavas,
went to the regions of Pātāla
which even

606 Prahlāda, Bali and Śambara
failed to do in the past.
All this wealth
Śauri-Krishna has brought from that region.

607 Krishna trapped Mura and killed him,
along with the Pañcajana rākṣasa,
after which
he destroyed Niśumbha.

608 He attacked the Danava Hayagrīva
and killed him.
The anti-god Naraka was next to die
at his hands.
Keśava-Krishna returned the earrings to Aditi
and restored the gods' honour.

609 The Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis,
under Krishna's protection, are safe.
You are free now
to perform soma-rasa rituals and yajñas.

610 When the time comes for the removal
of the anti-god Bāṇa,
I, the gods, and Sādhyas
will assist Śauri-Krishna."

611 With these words (Bhīṣma continued)
Vāsava-Indra left the Kukuras and Andhakas,
after embracing Balarāma,
Krishna and Vasudeva.

612 He also embraced Pradyumna,
Sāmba, Niṣaṭha, Aniruddha,
Sāraṇa, Babhru, Jhalli, Gada,
Bhānu, Cārudeṣṇa;

613 After which, slayer-of-Vṛtra Indra
embraced Sātyaki,
and affectionately took leave
of the Vṛṣṇis rājā Ugrasena.

614 After taking leave of Bhoja, Kṛtavarman
and other Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis,
Vāsava-Indra embraced
his younger brother Krishna.

615 In everyone's presence Indra,
husband of Śacī,
mounted his white elephant Airāvata
and vanished.

616 That magnificent elephant's trumpeting
seemed to shake
the foundations of the earth,
mid-space, and heaven.

617 A gold-embroidered elephant-seat;
gold-plated tusks;
beautifully caparisoned;
blazing with all manner of gems;

618 And multi-coloured pennants
and threads fluttered around him;
ichor on his temples,
like rain-streaked clouds.

619 That earth-supporting elephant
had a golden garland.
Sitting on Airāvata, Indra glowed
like the sun on Mandara hill.

620 Indra, husband of Śacī,
respected all over Vraja,
went away with Pāvaka-Agni
to the heaven-world,
taking with him
his wondrous hook-like thunderbolt.

621 Following him were the hosts of Maruts,
Kubera, Varuṇa
and other gods
on elephants and chariots.

622 Indra took the Wind-Way first,
till he came to the Fire-Way.
Reaching it,
he disappeared from sight.

623 All the Dāśārha ladies,
Ugrasena's wives,
the world-reputed foster-mother of Krishna,
Yaśodā;

624 Balarāma's husband-devoted wife Revatī,
mahā-fortune-favoured Krishna's faithful wives
Rukmiṇī, Satyā and Jāmbavatī;
the Gāndhāra king's daughter Śiṁśumā;

625 Viśokā, Lakṣmaṇā,
gentle Sumitrā, Ketumā;
and the other wives
of Vāsudeva Krishna –

626 All emerged from their palaces
with Śrī, goddess of grace and beauty,
to welcome Keśava-Krishna and greet
the lovely new queens of Acyuta-Krishna.

627 Devakī and Rohiṇī
walked ahead of the other queens.
All approached Krishna,
who was talking with Halabhṛtā-Balarāma.

628 Both brothers rose and paid their respects
first to Rohiṇī;
then Devakī; then, in precedence,
the rest of the seven devīs.

629 In this way Krishna and Balarāma
honoured the Vṛṣṇi ladies;
Devakī, Krishna's mother, sat on an excellent seat,
and asked Keśava-Krishna and Balarāma

630 To sit on her lap; with her two sons with large bull-eyes,
she looked like World-Mother Deva-mātā Aditi,
with Mitra and Varuṇa on both sides,
enhancing her effulgence.

631 Exactly at that moment
the daughter of Yaśodā entered,
all her lovely limbs
aglow with youth.

632 That bewitchingly beautiful girl
was Ekānaṅga,
who was the cause of the killing of Kaṁsa
by Puruṣottama-Krishna.

633 Bhagavān Balarāma rose and caught her
by both arms;
affectionately he smelt his sister's head.
Mādhava-Krishna took her right hand.

634 The sabhā saw Balarāma and Krishna with her,
like Lakṣmī on a lotus
flanked by two
splendid leader-elephants.

635 The Vṛṣṇi men, delighted,
showered ghee-soaked fine rice
and flowers on the head
of Janārdana-Krishna.

636 And Madhusūdana-Krishna sat down
in the midst of all the Vṛṣṇi young men,
his family members,
friends and acquaintances.

637 Honoured by everyone,
mahā-muscled Krishna,
enhancer of the fame of the Vṛṣṇis,
Madhusūdana-Krishna, entered his palace.

638 Always-happy Krishna
spent happy days there with Rukmiṇī,
after which Satyabhāmā
and Jāmbavatī

639 Received the pleasure of the company
of the greatest Yādava, Krishna.
Finally, Krishna returned
to the palace of Rukmiṇī.

640 In this way, *tāta,* dear Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Bhīṣma),
Śarṅga-bow-wielding Krishna passed happy days
and nights in Dvārakā with his wives.

641 This is the story of the birth
of mahā-ātmaned Krishna in the world of men.
Mahārāja-Yudhiṣṭhira! The great feats he achieved
for the gods' welfare, on account of his son
Aniruddha, could not have been achieved
by the gods themselves, led by Vāsava-Indra.

642 There was a rājā called Bāṇa,
the eldest son of Bali.
He was a monarch, brave, thousand-armed,
glittering with accomplishments.

643 Bāṇa, with a truthful mind,
did severe tapasyā.
For many years he devoted himself
to propitiating Rudra-Śiva,

644 And Śaṅkara-Śiva granted him a boon.
Gratified, Bāṇa returned
to the city of Śoṇita
and recommenced his rule.

645 And he kept harassing the gods.
He defeated Indra and other gods,
and ruled them
as if he were Kubera himself.
The sage Śukrācārya
did much to help him.

646 Bāṇa had a daughter named Uṣā,
unparalleled in beauty.
She was like the daughter
of the apsarā Menakā.

647 Mahā-radiant Pradyumna's son Aniruddha,
by secret means,
found access to Uṣā,
and enjoyed sexual relations with her.

648 But mahā-illustrious Bāṇa got news
of Aniruddha's secret meetings with Uṣā
and put both his daughter
and her lover in prison.

649 He was a fine young man,
an adult of lawful age,
but he had to suffer incessantly
from Bāṇa's repeated insults.

650 It was about this time
the bull-brave muni Nārada
came to Dvārakā, met Krishna,
and said to him:

651 "Enhancer of Yādava glory!
Even as I speak,
your grandson Aniruddha is being persecuted
by infinitely powerful Bāṇa."

652 Saying this, the celestial ṛṣi Nārada
went to Bāṇa's capital Śoṇita.
Janārdana-Krishna, upset by the information
of Nārada,

653 Summoned Baladeva-Balarāma
and mahā-radiant Pradyumna,
and all three mounted Garutmat-Garuḍa,
and flew towards Bāṇa's capital.

654 Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira! Anger filled the minds
of these three bull-brave heroes
as they sped towards the city
of the anti-god king.

655 They saw the brass-gates
of Bāṇa's capital.
The doors of the houses
were all made of silver.

656 Golden its buildings,
studded with gem and diamond work.
Groves and gardens everywhere;
singing and dancing.

657 Golden lattices; singing birds in cages;
lotus-filled pools;
healthy men, lovely women;
– a veritable heaven!
Even Krishna, Balarāma and Pradyumna
were astounded.

658 In Bāṇa's capital,
gods acted as guards and sentinels;
among them were Maheśvara-Śiva, Guha-Kārttikeya,
Bhadrakālī and Pāvaka-Agni.

659 Wielder-of-conch-cakra-and-mace Krishna,
in a furious attack,
routed the guards
of the eastern gates,
and mounted an offensive
against the Śaṅkara-guarded northern.

660 Mahā-radiant trident-wielding Maheśvara-Śiva
stood firm.
When he discovered that Krishna
was planning an attack

661 From the left flank,
out of desire for Bāṇa's welfare,
he picked up the bow called Pināka
and waited.

662 A fierce clash took place between
Vāsudeva-Krishna and Maheśvara-Śiva –
fierce, unforgettable, horripilating,
and indescribable.

663 Both the gods were bent
on total victory.
Both in anger hurled divine missiles
at each other.

664 But Janārdana-Krishna won sooner
than expected,
and in no time was ready
to set foot in the city.

665 He entered; and there followed
a terrible encounter
between the anti-god Bāṇa
and mahā-furious Janārdana-Krishna.

666 Flushed with rage,
Bāṇa aimed his bow
and let loose a volley of sharp arrows
at Keśava-Krishna.

667 One by one his thousand arms released
his arsenal
of remarkable war-weapons
at unbudging Krishna.

668 Krishna repulsed them all.
In no time at all,
Adhokṣaja-Krishna lifted his divine cakra,
and taking aim,

669 Hurled it in Bāṇa's direction.
It hit all his thousand arms,
slicing and shredding them
(Bhīṣma continued).

670 Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira! Bewildered by Krishna's attack,
Bāṇa fell
like a branchless tree,
all his arms sliced off.

671 This was how Krishna
killed the anti-god Bāṇa
and rescued Pradyumna's son Aniruddha
from prison.

672 Aniruddha and his wife Uṣā
were saved, and Govinda-Krishna
appropriated Bāṇa's vast treasure
of gems and gold.

673 Whatever wealth Bāṇa had,
in cattle and other possessions,
became Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna's
for Yādava glory.

674 Collecting that enormous hoard of riches,
Madhusūdana-Krishna
placed it on Garuḍa's back
(Bhīṣma continued).

675 Mahā-powerful Baladeva-Balarāma,
mahā-heroic Pradyumna,
mahā-radiant Aniruddha,
lovely Uṣā and her retinue of maids –

676 All sat on Garuḍa's back,
together with Krishna,
with the varied
costly pieces of booty.

677 Conch-mace-cakra-and-sword-
wielding Krishna,
mahā-radiant wearer of saffron robes,
himself mounted Garuḍa,

678 Like Bhāskara the sun on a hill,
glittering with glory,
and flew away
in the direction of Dvārakā.

679 Returning to his capital,
Krishna passed his time
as Vāsava-Indra does
in his fabulous heaven-city.

680 Śauri-Krishna slew the anti-god Mura,
he killed
Niśumbha and Naraka,
and made Prāgjyotiṣa

681 Once again accessible to all.
The twang of his bow
and roar of his Pāñcajanya conch
struck fear everywhere.

682 Keśava-Krishna also humbled
the great Rukmin,
whose armies were like cloud-masses,
who was always secure.

683 Cakra-and-mace-wielding Krishna,
having defeated
the mighty-armied Rukmin,
rescued Rukmiṇī of the Bhojas

684 In his cloud-roaring, sun-dazzling chariot.
She is now the queen of Krishna,
and reputed
loveliest among women.

685 Krishna has subdued king Āhuti
of Jāruthi city;
Śiśupāla too, and Śaibya,
Dantavakra, Śatadhanvā, and other Kṣatriyas.
He has killed Indradyumna,
Kālayavana and Kaśerumān.

686 Lotus-eyed Puruṣottama-Krishna
shattered a hundred hills
with his cakra
and fought against Dyumatsena,

687 Who was strong like Agni,
had the stamina of Varuṇa,
who could cover huge distances
in a flash,

688 Who was lord of cattle, tall as a palm-tree.
Śārṅga-bow-wielding Krishna
trapped him on Mahendra hill
near Irāvatī river and killed him.

689 Krishna pierced the defences
of anti-god-surrounded Lokapāla-Varuṇa,
who lived on a hill
in Prāgjyotiṣa,

690 And defeated him –
a feat that all others
had thought impossible,
thinking Varuṇa to be invincible.

691 And though Mahendra-Indra personally
guarded the *pārijāta* tree,
mighty-armed Kesava-Krishna stole it
from under his very eyes.

692 One by one, Janārdana-Krishna overran
the kingdoms
of Pāṇḍya, Pauṇḍra, Matsya,
Kaliṅga and Aṅga.

693 Bull-brave Yādava Krishna,
standing in his chariot,
killed a hundred Kṣatriyas
and took away
Śiṁśumā, the Gāndhāra princess,
and made her his queen.

694 O Yudhiṣṭhira! Cakra-and-mace-wielding Krishna,
to please Babhru,
rescued his wife
who was abducted by Veṇudāri.

695 Not only that – Madhusūdana-Krishna
subjugated the kingdom of Veṇudāri
with its horses,
cattle and elephants.

696 And as for the anti-god Baṇa –
whose tapasya-obtained prowess and skill
were such
that even the gods,

697 Led by Vāsava-Indra,
despaired of ever defeating him –
who, in fact, humbled the gods
on the battlefield –

698 Mahā-ātmaned Govinda-Krishna not only
defeated him but ripped to shreds
his thousand aims,
and finally slew him.

699 Madhusūdana-Krishna slew
other rākṣasas too,
among them Pīṭha, Paiṭhaka,
Kaṁsa and Atiloman.

700 And mahā-illustrious Krishna was responsible
for arranging the killing
of Jambha, Airāvata, Virūpa,
and foe-smashing Śambara.

701 Penetrating the city of Bhogavatī,
lotus-eyed Krishna routed
the nāga Vāsuki and rescued
the sons of Rohiṇī.

702 These are just a few instances
of how young Janārdana-Krishna
performed many marvellous feats,
with Saṁkarṣaṇa-Balarāma's help.

703 Krishna is the instiller of fear
and lack of fear in the gods and anti-gods.
He is the supreme Lord
of all.

704 He will crush all ill-ātmaned evil-doers
and increase the welfare
of the gods
before leaving this world

705 Mahā-illustrious Krishna will take
the ṛṣi-radiant luxurious city
of Dvārakā with him and drown it
in the ocean.

706 And the ocean-waters of Varuṇa
will wash over temple-studded,
sacrificial-post-filled,
garden-and-lake-lovely Dvārakā.

707 When Sārṅga-bow-wielding Vāsudeva-Krishna
leaves the sun-brilliant city of Dvārakā,
then will the ocean
claim her as its own.

708 For there is no one among gods,
anti-gods, no rājā worthy now,
nor will ever be worthy to be the resident
of Krishna-less Dvārakā.

709 When that happens, all the mahā-chariot-heroes,
the Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas,
to the last woman and child,
will perish.

710 This is how things will come to pass,
as they must, for the Dāśārhas.
For Krishna alone is Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa,
Soma, Sūrya and Savitā.

711 He is immeasurable,
none is higher than him.
He wills himself, and protects all.
Bhagavan Krishna plays
with the world's creatures happily,
like a child with a ball.

712 Krishna is not born in any womb,
he cannot be humanly conceived;
he is self-born,
self-conceiving.

713 Like bubbles frothing out of water
and becoming water,
all moving and unmoving life flows from
and into Nārāyaṇa.

714 Who can narrate the full glory
of mahā-muscled Keśava-Krishna?
Outside of his Viśvarūpa World-Form
there is nothing; he is all.

715 Śiśupāla is an infantile fool.
He does not know
the real nature of Krishna,
and so speaks as he does.

716 Śiśupāla does not see with the eyes
of a true seeker of dharma:
he does not see
the truth of dharma.

717 Who is there in this assembly
of young and old mahā-ātmaned kings
who still dares to withold pūjā
from Krishna?

718 If Śiśupāla still thinks
this pūjā is a farce,
then let him now do what he thinks
is the right thing to do.

SECTION THIRTY-NINE

1 Mahā-powerful Bhīṣma stopped
(continued Vaiśampāyana);
it was now Sahadeva's turn to reply strongly
to Śiśupāla:

2 "If there is any king here
who objects to the pūjā
that I offer Keśava-Krishna,
slayer of Keśi –

3 On his head, and on the heads
of those like him,
I stamp my foot! Let him step forward
and take my challenge!

4 Let all the intelligent kings here
approve the pūjā
of our ācārya, our father,
our *arghya*-deserving guru."

5 Sahadeva lifted his leg
and showed it to the kings.
Not one of those proud
and wise rājās said a word.

6 Even as he did this, a shower of flowers
fell on Sahadeva's head.
Invisible voices intoned:
"Excellent! Excellent! *Sādhu! Sādhu!*"

7 Dressed in black deerskin,
past-present-and-future-knowing Nārada,
knower-of-Krishna's-invincibility Narada,
Nārada the remover of all doubts,

8 Learned in all the branches
of the world's learning,
said these clear words
to the large assembly:

9 "Those who refuse pūjā
to lotus-eyed Krishna –
treat them as dead though living.
Refuse even to talk to them."

10 Sahadeva paid his pūjā-respect
to those who deserved it
(for he could tell Kṣatriya from Brahmin)
and completed the ritual.

11 When Krishna received the primary pūjā,
foe-destroying Śiśupāla,
copper-red eyes blazing,
shouted to the kings:

12 "I am here ready to lead you –
what are you wavering for?
Let's offer battle
to the Vṛṣṇis and Pāṇḍavas!"

13 Inciting them in this way,
the rājā of the Cedis
began scheming on how best
to frustrate the yajña.

14 The invited kings who had come in a group
with Sunītha-Śiśupāla,
looked simultaneously angry,
flushed and nervous.

15 They murmured,
"Let us act in such a way that none can say
we approved of Yudhiṣṭhira's coronation
and the worship of Vāsudeva-Krishna."

16 Their anger made the rājās
lose their heads and speak in this manner;
also, they were proud
of their great prowess.

17 Some friends tried to calm them,
but they were livid with anger.
They roared like lions
baulked of their prey.

18 Krishna was quick to see
that the unebbing sea of rājās
with their waves of soldiers
was eager for battle.

SECTION FORTY

1 Seeing the great maṇḍala of kings
fanned by anger
like wind-roused waves
at the time of the end of the world,

2 Yudhiṣṭhira spoke to the wise Kuru grandfather
Pitāmaha Bhīṣma,
as foe-slaying Indra speaks
to Bṛhaspati:

3 "The maha-ocean of kings
is wild with anger.
Tell me, Pitāmaha, what I should do.
I do not want my yajña interrupted,
and I would not like
my subjects harmed."

4 Bhīṣma listened carefully
to dharma-knowing Dharmarājā-Yudhiṣṭhira
and then the Kaurava Pitāmaha replied
(continued Vaiśampāyana):

5 "Tiger of the Kurus!
Do not be alarmed.
Can a dog kill a lion?
I have already worked out
a viable plan,
an auspicious plan.

6 These kings of the earth
are like a pack of dogs
barking away
at a sleeping lion.

7 *Tāta*, child, that's what dogs will do.
Not surprising
that these kings bark
at the sleeping Vṛṣṇi lion.

8 Krishna the lion-among-men sleeps.
Till he wakes up,
this king of the Cedis thinks
he is the lion.

9 Śiśupāla has little brain.
He wants a quick trip
to the kingdom of Yama,
taking these kings with him.

10 Krishna wishes to recover
for himself the glory
and radiance that are now
Śiśupāla's.

11 These kings,
led by the wicked king of Cedi,
must surely be a little mad,
O Yudhiṣṭhira.

12 All who tiger-among-men-Krishna wishes
to remove from the earth
first become a little mad,
like this Cedi ruler Śiśupāla.

13 Mādhava-Krishna is the creator and destroyer
of the four forms of life
in the three worlds,
Yudhiṣṭhira."

14 The king of the Cedis heard Bhīṣma
and replied
in clear, harsh speech
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

SECTION FORTY-ONE

1 "Old and disreputable rascal of the Kurus,
  are you not ashamed
to try to cow these kings
  with empty threats?

2 You're in the third stage of life
  you're a eunuch, you are sexless –
naturally you speak against dharma
  the way you do.
Strange that a man like you should be known
  as the foremost of the Kurus!

3 With you to lead them, the Kauravas
  are like a sinking boat tied
to a sinking boat, like one blind man clinging
  to another blind man.

4 Oh, you have moved us deeply
  with your long,
repeated stories of Krishna
  killing Pūtanā and others!

5 You are foolish and arrogant!
  Nothing but praise of Keśava-Krishna!
You'll need a hundred tongues
  for such intense praise!

6 How is it, Bhīṣma, that you,
  superior to Krishna in knowledge,
sing the praises
  of a cowherd of ill-repute?

7 What's so special in Krishna
  killing a vulture in his boyhood?
Or in his killing
  a horse and a bull,
both of whom knew nothing
  about the art of war?

8 And what's so marvellous, Bhīṣma,
  in the baby Krishna
sending lifeless wood rolling down
  with a flick of his foot?

9 And what's so special in felling
two *arka*-trees,
and killing a nāga-snake?
What's so wonderful in that?

10 And as for Govardhana hill –
that ant-hill! –
what's so brilliant about holding it aloft
for a week?

11 And I'm told people are really impressed
when you tell them,
'Krishna gulped down
vast quantities of food.'

12 O dharma-knowing Bhīṣma!
Krishna grew strong
on the food he got
from mahā-radiant Kaṁsa.
Then Krishna killed Kaṁsa.
– Marvellous, Bhīṣma, marvellous!

13 O Bhīṣma, you Kaurava rascal,
what do you know of dharma?
Men of dharma have not taught you this –
listen to me:

14 Men of dharma say
we should not use weapons
against women, cattle, Brahmins,
and those who give shelter,

15 And those whose food we have eaten. True?
But all this good advice is wasted on you.

16 You Kaurava scoundrel! You come and tell me
Keśava-Krishna is superior
in wisdom and age.
Do you think that I know nothing?

17 If a person who kills women and cattle
is to get pūjā,
what will become of dharma, O Bhīṣma?
Yet you praise him!

18 'Wisest of the wise!
Lord of the universe!
That's what you say.
And Janārdana-Krishna believes you!'

19 How can one convince
a fanatic chanter of praise?
Like the *bhūliṅga* bird,
you have no sense.

20 I have a feeling that is what you're doing.
It's your nature.
The Pāṇḍavas are as evil-minded
as you.

21 Naturally they praise Krishna,
and follow you as a man of dharma,
who have chosen
to depart from dharma!

22 Bhīṣma! What man is there who,
knowing himself superior
in knowledge and dharma,
will yet go against dharma, as you have done?

23 If you are really wise, if you really had dharma,
why did you abduct Ambā, who was in love

24 With another man?
And wasn't it your brother Vicitravīrya
who behaved nobly
in this matter,

25 And did not marry her,
though you had brought her for him?
You think highly of yourself.
Isn't it true
that sons were begotten by another
on your brother's widow?

26 Bhīṣma, where's your dharma?
As for your brahmacarya –
well, either you're very stupid
or very impotent.

27 Learned-in-dharma Bhīṣma!
I see a bleak future for you.
You preach a lot.
But have you really learnt from dharma-knowers?

28 Yajña, gift, study,
sacrifices involving large *dakṣiṇās* –
all these do not bring one sixteenth the merit
of having children.

29 The merit one earns by fasting
and observing strict vows
is, I think, frustrated
if one remains childless.

30 You are childless – you are old –
you preach false dharma.
Like the fabled swan,
you will be killed by your relatives.

31 That's an old story
I heard from wise men.
Let me repeat it to you.
Listen well, Bhīṣma.

32 A long time ago lived a *haṁsa*
on a sea coast
A pompous bird, always spouting dharma,
but acting otherwise.

33 The only words he spoke were:
'Follow dharma, give up adharma.'
That's all the birds heard
this truth-speaking swan say.

34 Oviparous sea-dwelling creatures,
it is said, brought him
gifts of food
because they were followers of dharma.

35 They left their eggs with him,
and circled and dived
in the ocean waters.
The rascal ate their eggs.

36 He knew what was good for him!
Except that one day,
seeing the eggs daily decreasing,
one of the birds –
a mahā-clever one –
caught him in the act.

37 Then he returned
to the other birds
and blurted out the sad story
of the swan's trickery.

38 The birds kept watch,
saw him eat their eggs,
swooped on him
and killed the hypocrite without mercy.

39 Kaurava-Bhīṣma, it seems to me
that you are that *haṁsa*.
Watch out – these angry birds here
may yet kill you.

40 Those who know the Purāṇas sing a little song;
so let me give it to you,
O Bhīṣma of the Bharata dynasty.
It may interest you.

41 'You know you're a hypocrite,
and yet you preach.
Your egg-eating will expose you,
not your speech.'

SECTION FORTY-TWO

1 Śiśupāla continued: Mahā powerful Jarāsaṁdha
was a rājā I respected.
He considered Krishna a menial,
and refused to fight him.

2 Which man will condone the crime
of killing Jarāsaṁdha
which Keśava-Krishna, Bhīma and Arjuna
are guilty of?

3 Slipping into his capital
by a secret gate,
disguised as a Veda-knowing Brahmin,
Krishna faced Jarāsaṁdha.

4 That dharmātmā king offered
wicked-atmaned Krishna water
to wash Krishna's feet – though initially
he was reluctant to do so.

5 When Bhīma, Arjuna and Krishna
were asked by Jarāsaṁdha
to eat the food he offered,
Krishna refused.

6 If Krishna really is the lord of the universe,
as you, Bhīṣma,
are foolish enough to say, why does he deny
to himself the status of a Brahmin?

7 I am surprised! How often, Bhīṣma,
you lead the Pāṇḍavas astray
from the path of goodness –
yet they think you are honest.

8 But perhaps, O Bhīṣma of the Bharatas,
that is as it should be – after all,
they have an impotent, doddering adviser
in moral matters."

9 Bhīma heard these harsh words –
harsh in meaning,
and harsh-sounding –
and he was roused to fury.

10 His lotus-large eyes expanded
in the heat of his anger,
they became inflamed
like molten copper.

11 The kings saw three deep furrows
line his forehead,
like the three-coursing Gaṅgā
on the three-fold peak.

12 He gnashed his teeth;
his face looked like cosmic Kāla
at the end of a yuga
about to swallow all creatures.

13 He jumped up with a bound,
but strong-armed Bhīṣma
restrained him,
like Mahādeva-Śiva restraining Kārttikeya.

14 Bhīṣma's gentle, persuasive words
slowly soothed
the impetuous anger
of the great hero Bhīma.

15 The rain-swollen ocean obeys
the limits of its shores;
so Bhīma obeyed the words
of noble Bhīṣma.

16 But Bhīma's anger was unable
to deter the hero Śiśupāla,
who stood confident
in the strength of his principles.

17 Bhīma kept jumping up,
but foe-crushing Śiśupāla ignored him,
as a lion ignores an impertinent
infuriated creature.

18 The Cedi rājā Śiśupāla was amused
by the spectacle of Bhīma
jumping up and down;
he laughed and said:

19 "Let him be, Bhīṣma.
Let these kings see him
shrivelled by my prowess,
like a moth by fire."

20 When wise Bhīṣma, foremost of the Kurus,
heard the Cedi ruler say this,
he turned to Bhīma,
and said:

SECTION FORTY-THREE

1 "Rājā Śiśupāla was born three-eyed
and four-handed
in the race of Cedi. He brayed like an ass
at the time of his birth.

2 His father and mother were alarmed
by the evil omen,
and decided to abandon
the baby.

3 But a disembodied voice from the sky
said to the king and his wife
and to the terror-stricken ministers
and purohita:

4 *Your majesty, this son of yours*
will gain fame and power.
Do not be afraid.
Look after him well.

5 *He will not die now.*
His time has not come.
The man who will kill him
has also taken birth.

6 Moved by affection for her son
and wishing his welfare,
his troubled mother replied
to the voice in the sky:

7 'I fold my palms in *añjali*
to whoever has spoken.
Whoever you may be,
god or any other being, tell me:

8 Who will be responsible
for the death of my son?'
Once again the voice from
the sky replied:

9 *He, who when he takes this child*
on his lap – he will cause
the child's extra arms to drop off
and become five-headed snakes –

10 *He, who when seen*
by this child,
will cause his third eye to vanish –
he will be the child's slayer.

11 When news of the child's three eyes
and four arms spread,
along with the story
of the sky-voice,

12 Many kings came from many parts
of the world to see him.
The Cedi monarch
gave them pūjā-respect,

13 And placed the baby
in the lap of each
of the thousand kings.
But the prediction did not materialise.

14 When news of this strange occurrence
spread to the city
of Dvārakā,
the two maha-powerful heroes,

15 Saṁkarṣaṇa-Balarāma and Janārdana-Krishna,
went to the Cedi capital
to see their aunt,
the queen of the kingdom of Cedi.

16 Balarāma and Keśava-Krishna greeted everyone
in the traditional manner,
paid homage to king Dāmoghoṣa and his queen,
and took their seats.

17 After they had been lovingly welcomed,
the queen Devī Śrutaśravā
personally placed her baby
in the lap of Krishna.

18 No sooner had the child
touched Krishna's lap
than his extra arms fell off,
and the eye in his forehead vanished.

19 The queen was agitated;
she begged Krishna for a favour.
'Oh mahā-muscled Krishna!
I am so afraid. Grant me a boon.

20 You help all those
who are distressed –
you remove everyone's fear.'
Krishna, descendant of Yadu, replied:

21 'Dharma-knowing devī! Why are you so alarmed?
Do not fear, my aunt.
What boon can I give you?
What would you like?

22 Whether it is in my power or not,
I will do as you wish.'
Then she said to Krishna,
descendant of Yadu:

23 'O mahā-powerful one, tiger of the Yādavas,
for my sake
forgive the offences of Śiśupāla.
Lord! Grant me this.'

24 Krishna replied, 'My aunt,
I will pardon
up to one hundred death-deserving offences
of Śiśupāla. Do not grieve.'

25 "This is the proud scoundrel Śiśupāla, "
Bhīṣma said to Bhīma,
"who invites you to battle,
protected by Govinda-Krishna's boon."

SECTION FORTY-FOUR

1 Bhīṣma continued: "But the challenge to you
is not his wish –
it is Krishna's,
who is lord of the universe.

2 Would I have allowed anyone
in the world to abuse me as he did
if I did not know
his death-hour had come?

3 This maha-muscled hero is a fragment
of Hari-Krishna's own energy.
Krishna today will take back into himself
that energy.

4 O tiger-of-the-Kauravas Bhīma!
That is why this ill-minded Cedi rājā
shouts and rants at us
without the least care in the world."

5 Śiśupāla heard Bhīṣma,
and could not control himself.
He looked at Bhīṣma
and retorted angrily:

6 "You sing Keśava-Krishna's glories
like a hired chanter.
As far as I am concerned,
even my foes are as glorious as Krishna.

7 If you are so fond of professional praise,
come, forget Janārdana-Krishna
and sing some praises
of these rājās too, Bhīṣma.

8 Sing of the king of Darada,
of Bāhlika,
whose strength shattered the earth
when he was born.

9 Sing of Karṇa,
who is king of Aṅga and Baṅga,
strong like thousand-eyed Indra himself,
who pulls taut his great bow,

10 Who has flesh-armour
of divine craftsmanship,
who glows with the splendour
of the rising sun,

11 Who humbled in a wrestling bout
the supposedly invincible Jarāsaṁdha
said to equal
Vāsava-Indra in valour.

12 Sing of Droṇa and his son Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman;
both father and son deserve
the highest praise, being great Brahmins
and mahā-chariot-heroes.

13 If they are stirred to anger,
they can, the two of them together,
wipe out this earth's
animate and inanimate life.

14 I can see no king, O Bhīṣma,
to equal Droṇa and Aśvatthāman
in battle.
Why do you leave them out?

15 You leave out Duryodhana,
the strong-armed king of kings,
an Indra-among-rājās without an equal
in this ocean-girt world;

16 You leave out Rājā Jayadratha,
skilled in war-weapons;
and mahā-valiant Druma, ācārya of the Kimpuruṣas,
greatly-famed;

17 You leave out Kṛpa, son of Śaradvat,
ācārya of the Kauravas –
and your special choice
alights on Keśava-Krishna!

18 If you ignore the great archer
and finest-of-men Puruṣottama Rukmin,
what gives you the right
to choose Keśava-Krishna?

19 Mahā-illustrious Bhīṣmaka is left out,
and lord-of-the-earth Dantavakra,
Magadha's Sahadeva,
Bhagadatta, Yūpaketu,

20 Virāṭa, Drupada, Śakuni,
Bṛhadbala, Pāṇḍya,
Avanti's Vinda and Anuvinda,
Śveta and Uttara;

21 Mahā-fortune-favoured Śaṅkha,
confident Vṛṣasena, powerful Ekalavya,
the mahā-chariot-hero Kaliṅga king –
all ignored – and Keśava-Krishna chosen!

22 If you really are so keen
on praising others,
why not practise praising Śalya
and other world-rulers?

23 But who am I to give you advice
when you do not seem
to have learned anything
from the great men of dharma?

24 Don't you know, Bhīṣma,
glorifying oneself and maligning oneself,
glorifying others and maligning others,
are never done by noble people?

25 No one specially listens
to your endless glorification
of undeserving Keśava-Krishna;
you must be foolish indeed to persevere.

26 Just because you think so,
is not going to make this universe
the sole property
of a wretched cowherd of the Bhojas.

27 Your actions seem to go against your nature.
I told you earlier
about the *bhūliṅga* bird.
You remember, don't you?

28 This bird lives on the other side
of the Himālayas.
What it says is the opposite
of what it does.

29 It shrieks '*Mā sāhasaṁ*!'
'Don't be rash!'
Silly bird, it doesn't realise
its own rashness.

30 For that foolish bird
loves to peck out pieces of flesh
from a lion's teeth
when the lion's munching away.

31 One crunch, and the bird's dead.
It seem to me,
hypocritical Bhīṣma,
that you are much like that bird.

32 One crunch from us,
and where are you?
You must surely be the master hypocrite
of all the world."

33 Bhīṣma listened to these harsh
and insulting words
of the Cedi king, and said
(Vaiśampāyana continued):

34 "True, I live because I am favoured
by these kings –
but I do not care two straws
for all of them."

35 When Bhīṣma said this,
the kings rose, angered.
Some stood up straight,
others began shouting at him.

36 Some of the great bowmen said:
"Bhīṣma, proud old rascal,
thinks too much of himself.
He deserves no quarter.

37 Let's kill Bhīṣma right now,
like an animal.
Let's band together
and burn him alive like straw."

38 Bhīṣma heard them.
Intelligent Bhīṣma,
pitāmaha of the Kurus,
said to the kings:

39 "Too much talk. No end to it.
Words, words, more words.
Listen, kings,
to what I say:

40 Kill me like an animal,
or burn me like straw –
but I place my foot
on your heads!

41 Here is undecaying Govinda-Krishna.
He has received our pūjā.
If anyone wants
a quick death today,

42 Let him challenge Mādhava-Krishna,
wielder of the cakra and mace.
Let him die
and enter Krishna's body."

SECTION FORTY-FIVE

1 Śiśupāla heard Bhīṣma
and, eager to fight
Vāsudeva-Krishna,
the powerful rājā of Cedi said:

2 "Come, Janārdana Krishna, I challenge you!
Fight with me today.
I will kill you
and all the Pāṇḍavas.

3 They deserve death too, Krishna,
they do, for bypassing
all these kings and giving pūjā
to one who is not a rājā.

4 That's what I think.
Those who worship the undeserving
deserve death. You are not a raja, Krishna –
you are a menial."

5 Śiśupāla stood up and shouted angrily.
When he stopped,
Krishna said gently
to the assembly:

6 "Lords of the earth! This cruel man
is the son of a Sātvata lady,
but he is a disgrace
to the Sātvatas.
What have we done to harm him?
Why is he against us?

7 He is the son of my aunt, O lords of men,
yet, learning that we were away
in Prāgjyotiṣa, this scoundrel
tried to set fire to Dvārakā.

8 When the Bhoja rājā was enjoying himself
on Raivataka hill,
he attacked, killed many,
and carried off others to prison.

9 In an attempt to frustrate
my father's *aśvamedha* yajña,
this wretch stole the sacrificial horse
set free under armed guards.

10 Moved by lust, this scoundrel
abducted the protesting wife
of pure-minded Babhru
on her way to Sauvīra from Dvārakā.

11 Always bent on wickedness,
he raped his maternal uncle's daughter,
the virtuous Bhadrā,
who was betrothed
to the king of Kurūṣa, by using māyā
and disguising himself as the Kurūṣa king.

12 All this I have silently suffered,
because of the boon I gave to my aunt.
Good, everything today at last
has come out in the open before all these rājās.

13 Look at the way he spouts
his hatred of me!
Consider all that he has done
behind my back.

14 He deserves death from me today
for the pride
that he flaunts before this maṇḍala of rājās.
I cannot forgive him today
for the insults
he has heaped on me.

15 This fool must have wanted to die,
for he once lusted
after my wife Rukmiṇī,
but was unable to get her.
How can a Śūdra hope to gain
the wisdom of the Vedas?"

16 When Vāsudeva-Krishna had finished,
the earth-lords murmured among themselves
and began to criticise
the Cedi rājā Śiśupāla.

17 Śiśupāla heard Krishna
and laughed out loud.
Still laughing, he turned
and said to Krishna:

18 "Krishna, you should be ashamed
of yourself,
talking about Rukmiṇī here –
wasn't she supposed to marry *me*?

19 Why don't you dare, Madhusūdana-Krishna,
to say before this assembly
of respectable people
that your wife was actually betrothed
to another man,
that man being me?

20 Krishna, forgive me if you have śraddhā for your aunt
or don't forgive me.
Be angry with me or friends.
What do I care?"

21 Even as Śiśupāla was speaking,
Bhagavān Madhusūdana-Krishna
thought of the cakra,
humbler of the pride of the Daityas.

22 The cakra materialised in his hand
immediately.
Eloquent Bhagavān Krishna
spoke up loudly:

23 "Rulers of the earth,
let me tell you why
I have forgiven him till now.
I made a promise to his mother
to forgive him
a hundred offences.

24 She asked me that boon,
and I granted it.
That number is now full.
Now, before your very eyes I will kill him."

25 Foe-chastising Krishna,
chief of the Yādavas,
angrily flung his *cakra*
and decapitated the rājā of the Cedis.

26 The mahā-muscled hero fell
like a cliff splintered by lightning.
A fierce radiance issued
from his body,

27 As lustrous as sunlight.
O mahārāja Janamejaya! It paid homage before
lotus-eyed, world-worshipped Krishna,
and entered Krishna's body.

28 The kings saw Śiśupāla's radiance
merge into Puruṣottama-Krishna,
finest of men,
and they were wonderstruck.

29 The instant Śiśupāla died,
drenching showers fell
from clear skies, thunder echoed,
the earth shook.

30 Some of the earth-lords kept
completely silent
during that indescribable time;
they stared at Janārdana-Krishna.

31 Some rubbed their palms nervously
with their forefingers;
others, completely bewildered,
bit hard on their lips.

32 Some earth-lords openly praised Krishna,
the Vṛṣṇi hero,
others became unnaturally excited,
others remained neutral.

33 The mahā-ṛṣis, pleased, praised Keśava-Krishna;
the mahātmā Brahmins
and mahā-powerful kings,
seeing Krishna's prowess,

34 Were delighted and praised Krishna.
Yudhiṣṭhira ordered his brothers
to carry out the funeral rites
of Śiśupāla,
the valiant son
of king Damaghoṣa.

35 Damaghoṣa's heroic son
was given the dignity
of the final saṁskāras.
That done, Yudhiṣṭhira

36 In the presence of his brothers
and all the kings,
installed the son of Śiśupāla
on the throne of Cedi.

37 Rice and corn and other food
in abundance
graced the Rājasūya Yajña
of the shining Kuru rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

38 It was graced with all the signs
of prosperity,
and protected by Keśava-Krishna;
it was elegant and pleasing to all.

39 The kings sat and watched
all the yajña-ceremonies
performed by Sahadeva
for the gratification of Krishna.

40 The yajña-enclosure had gates of gold,
brilliant like sunlight.
From the distant
it glowed like heaven.

41 Many beds, seats, and rest-grounds,
expensively constructed;
pots, platters, ladles,
all made of gold.

42 And hundreds of attendants
served delicious meals
of rice and curried dishes,
and sweet milk preparations.

43 Whenever the number
of feasting Brahmins
touched one hundred thousand,
conches were gaily sounded.

44 Many times daily
were the conches heard.
And hearing them,
the vast concourse was amazed.

45 Able-bodied men had charge
of the daily cooking:
heaps of grains of all kinds,
almost hill-high;
huge pots of ghee, and rivers
of delicious curd.

46 So enormous was the mahā-yajña,
so many people,
it seemed that all of Jambū island
was present.

47 Rājās and chiefs,
dressed in rich robes and ornaments,
served the thousands of Brahmins
the tasty, spiced meals.

48 The Brahmins enjoyed their fill
and were gratified beyond words
with the elaborate preparations
made for them.

49 And the invited kings were stupefied
by the large numbers
of cattle
and other signs of prosperity.

50 The ṛtviks performed
the Rājasūya yajña rites
according to the traditional rules,
in perfect, pleasing order.

51 Vyāsa, Dhaumya, and the other fourteen ṛtviks
who conducted
the mahā yajña-rituals
did so in the prescribed manner.

52 There was not a single sadasya
among the assembled priests
who was not conversant
with the Vedas.

53 Not a single person in the yajña
remained hungry,
poor, sorrowing,
or in any other way deprived.

54 On Yudhiṣṭhira's instructions,
mahā-radiant Sahadeva saw to it
that all those who attended
were well fed and lodged.

55 And workers expressly trained
in observing the rituals
of such yajñas performed
their duties efficiently.

56 Veda-knowing Brahmins recited
from the sacred texts daily,
bringing joy
to their large audiences.

57 With gods, anti-gods, yakṣas, nagās,
and other divine beings present,
the yajña of mahā-ātmaned Yudhiṣṭhira
prospered.

58 With gandharvas, apsarās, gods,
munis and yakṣas everywhere,
it looked indeed
like a second heaven.
The songs of the Kimpuruṣas and Kinnaras
filled the air.

59 Nārada, mahā-refulgent Tumburu,
Viśvāvasu, Citrasena
and other singing gandharvas
entertained the assembly.

60 And when occasion arose, grammar-expert scholars
explained and recited the Itihāsas and Purāṇas.

61 The melodious sounds
of hundreds of kettledrums,
tabors, *maḍḍuka*-drums, trumpets, horns
and flutes filled with air.

62 Present at the yajña
were Brahmins, Vaiśyas,
Śūdras, and *mlecchas*;
poor, and middle-class;

63 People from many lands;
so that Yudhiṣṭhira's palace
looked like a universe
in miniature.

64 Bhīma, Suyodhana-Duryodhana, Droṇa,
and other Kauravas,
Vṛṣṇis and Pāñcālas –
all worked in that yajña.

65 O mahā-muscled Janamejaya!
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira's yajña shone
like the renowned Rājasūya yajña
of Soma the moon.

66 In that yajña Yudhiṣṭhira
gave away thousands of robes,
blankets, sheets, gold utensils
and ornaments.

67 Whatever wealth he obtained as gifts
from the invited kings,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira re-distributed
to the mahā-ātmaned Brahmins.
Several crores of gold coins
were gifted in this way.

68 What he did had never been done
by any lord of the earth,
nor will ever be done.
The officiating Brahmins

69 Were gratified
by the lavish gifts of wealth and clothes
at Yudhiṣṭhira's
Rājasūya yajña.

70 Yudhiṣṭhira went to Vyāsa,
Dhaumya, mahā-learned Narada,
Sumantu, Paila, Jaimini,
Vaiśampāyana,

71 Yājñavalkya, Kaṭha
and the mahā-ascetic Kalāpa,
and offered them
his profoundest pūjā-respect

72 Yudhiṣṭhira said,
"Your presence has brought me success
in my yajña.
To Janārdana-Krishna I am grateful."

73 And so, Janamejaya (continued Vaiśampāyana),
Yudhiṣṭhira ended by offering pūjā
to Madhava-Krishna,
lord-of-gods Balarāma, and Bhīṣma.

74 The Rājasūya ended.
From commencement to completion,
Bhagavān Krishna personally protected it
with the might
of his bow called the Śārṅga,
his *cakra*, and mace.

75 All the Kṣatriya kings came
to Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
after his ritual lustrations,
and said:

76 "Fortune has favoured you,
O king rich in dharma!
The fame of the Ajamīḍhas
has been enhanced by you.

77 Your yajña has been an act of mahā-dharma,
O Indra-among-rājās.
O tiger among men!
You have given us pūjā-respect.

78 Give us permission now
to return to our kingdoms."
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
heard the request

79 Of the rājās, and gave each
the pūjā-respect each deserved,
and said to his brothers,
"We invited these kings;

80 And now they would like to return
to their kingdoms.
Escort them to the boundaries
of our land."

81 Ordered by dharma-observing Yudhiṣṭhira,
the Pāṇḍavas princes
escorted the kings one by one,
as they left the sabhā.

82 Illustrious Dhṛṣṭadyumna
accompanied Virāṭa;
the mahā-chariot-hero Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
escorted mahā-ātmaned Yajñasena-Drupada.

83 Mahā-muscled Bhīma escorted Bhīṣma
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra;
lord-of-warriors Sahadeva went
with Droṇa and his son Aśvathāman.

84 Nakula escorted Subala and his son;
Draupadī's five sons and Abhimanyu
went with the mahā-chariot-hero
mountain kings.

85 Other bull-brave Kṣatriyas
went with the remaining kings.
Thousands of Brahmins,
after receiving pūjā-respect, left.

86 When all the Brahmins and kings
had departed,
illustrious Vāsudeva-Krishna said
to Yudhiṣṭhira:

87 "Kaurava descendant,
let me now return to Dvārakā.
Fortune has helped you accomplish
the finest-of-yajñas Rājasūya."

88 Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira
replied to Janārdana-Krishna:
"It is your grace that has helped me in this,
O Govinda-Krishna.

89 It is your grace
that helped me
subdue the Kṣatriyas
and collect tribute from them.

90 Valiant, defectless one,
how can I give you leave to go?
Without you,
I am left joyless.

91 But I know you have to return
to Dvārakā."
Hari-Krishna listened to Pṛthā-Kuntī's son;
then, with Yudhiṣṭhira,

92 He went to his aunt Kuntī, and said,
"My aunt, your sons today
have achieved the greatest
imperial honour.

93 They have obtained vast wealth,
they are crowned with success.
Rejoice with them.
Let me return to Dvārakā."

94 Keśava-Krishna said farewell
to Subhadrā and Draupadī,
after which he and Yudhiṣṭhira
emerged from the inner apartments.

95 He went through the ritual bath
of purification
and the *svasti* prayers.
The Brahmins blessed him.

96 His mahā-muscled charioteer Dāruka brought
the Tārkṣya-Garuḍa-flagged chariot,
cloud-magnificent, excellently-fashioned.
When it arrived,

97 Mahā-minded Kṛishna respectfully
did *pradakṣiṇa* around it
and, climbing into it, drove off
in the direction of Dvāravatī-Dvāraka.

98 Sātyaki and Kṛtavarman followed,
with waving yak-tail fans.
Baladeva-Balarāma
and hundreds of pūjā-respected Yādavas.

99 Said farewell and left also
with Hari-Krishna.
Śrīmān rājā-of-dharma Yudhiṣṭhira
rose from his golden throne

100 And, with his brothers,
followed on foot
the resplendent chariot
of mahā-powerful Vāsudeva-Krishna.

101 Lotus-eyed Krishna stopped
the chariot;
turning back,
he said to Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira.

102 "Pursue the welfare of your subjects
with patience and care.
Like clouds to all creatures,
like a mahā-tree to birds,

103 Like thousand-eyed Indra to the gods,
are you now
to all your relatives
and your numerous friends."

104 In this way Krishna talked
to Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira;
then they bid final farewell
and returned to their homes.
The chief of the Sātvatas Krishna
went to Dvārakā,

105 But rājā Duryodhana
and the son of Subala, Śakuni,
both bull-brave heroes,
stayed back in that celestial sabhā.

SECTION FORTY-SIX

1 The extremely difficult Rājasūya, the supreme ritual,
was successfully accomplished.
Vyāsa, surrounded by his disciples,
approached Yudhiṣṭhira.

2 Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers rose
and gave pūja-respect
to their grandfather, offering him water
to wash his feet.

3 Bhagavān Vyāsa sat down
on a golden seat,
and said to Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira:
"You may sit down."

4 When Yudhiṣṭhira
and his brothers
had all sat down,
eloquent Bhagavān Vyāsa said:

5 "Son of Kunti, fortune has favoured you
and made you emperor.
The Kurus have prospered
through you.

6 Lord of the earth! Give me permission now to go.
I have had my share of pūjā-respect."
Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira
said to Pitāmaha Vyāsa,

7 After first touching his feet:
"Finest of men,
I have a very serious misgiving,
and I know

8 Only you, O bull-brave Brahmin,
can help remove it.
Bhagavān ṛṣi Nārada said
that celestial, skyey
and earthly omens follow
the performance of the Rājasūya.

9 Tell me, has the killing
of the Cedi king Siśupāla
helped to nullify
these portents?"

10 The son of Parāśara,
Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana Vyāsa listened carefully
to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
and replied:

11 "O rājā, for thirteen years
these portents will continue;
they will end in the complete annihilation
of all Kṣatriyas.

12 You will be the cause,
O bull-brave Bharata;
Duryodhana's fault
and Bhīma and Arjuna's valour
will wipe out the entire line
of Kṣatriya kings.

13 O Indra-among-kings! Late tonight you will see
in a dream Vṛṣdhvaja-Śiva the Bull-Rider,
who is also Nilakaṇṭha the Blue-Throated,
Bhava the Existent,
Sthānu the Meditating One,
Kapāli the Skull-Drinker,
Tripurāntaka
the Slayer of the anti-god Tripura,

14 Horrific Paśupati the Lord of Creatures,
Mahādeva the God of gods,
Umāpati the Husband of Umā,
Hara the Seizer,
Śarva the killer, Vṛṣa the Potent,
Śūlī the Trident-Wielder,
Pinākī the Bow-Armed, Kṛttivāsa-

15 Śiva himself,
resplendent and tall and white like Kailasa,
astride his bull,
gazing at the *pitṛ*-presided south.

16 This will be your dream.
But do not be afraid.
There is no one who escapes
the power of Cosmic Time Kāla.

17 *Svasti te'astu.* May all go with you.
May you rule the earth with strength
and vigilance, and overcome all obstacles.
I am going to Kailāsa."

18 Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa
said this and,
accompanied by his Veda-dedicated disciples,
went to Kailāsa hill.

19 After his grandfather left,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira was lost in grief.
He sighed and kept thinking
of the supreme ṛṣi's words.

20 Yudhiṣṭhira thought:
What the great ṛṣi has predicted will happen.
How can human effort change
what is destined?

21 And mahā-refulgent Yudhiṣṭhira
turned to his brothers and said:
"O lions-among-men! You heard the words
of Dvaipayāna-Vyāsa.

22 What is there left for me
but to die?
Did he not say I would be the cause
of the Kṣatriyas' destruction?

23 My brothers, if Kāla so wills it,
so be it!
Why should I live any more?"
Phālguna-Arjuna said to Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira:

24 "Do not fall victim to mind-killing grief.
O rājā!
Get a hold on yourself.
Do what is good for the world, mahārāja!"

25 Yudhiṣṭhira, firm in truth,
revolved Dvaipayana-Vyāsa's words
in his mind,
and said to his brothers:

26 "May fortune always favour you,
my brothers!
I take this vow today.
What else can I do
from now on
except wish your welfare?

27 I will never once speak harshly
to any of you
or to any of the earth's kings.
I will pursue
the dutiful welfare
of my relatives and friends.

28 If I do this – if I treat others
as I treat my brothers,
all discord
will vanish from the world.
Discord
is the root of war.

29 My bull-brave brothers,
I will stay away from war,
I will do what is pleasing to others.
None will think ill of me."

30 The Pāṇḍavas, who had listened carefully,
always eager
to help Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira,
approved of his resolve.

31 Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira, after taking this vow
in front of his brothers,
offered homage
to the gods and pitṛs.

32 O bull-brave Bharata Janamejaya,
after the Kṣatriya kings left,
Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers performed
the auspicious rites.

33 Then Yudhiṣṭhira and his ministers
entered his palace, mahārāja.
But Duryodhana and Śakuni
stayed back in the lovely sabhā.

SECTION FORTY-SEVEN

1 O bull-brave Janamejaya! (continued Vaiśampāyana)
Duryodhana stayed back in the sabhā
and, with Śakuni,
carefully inspected
the entire mansion.

2 The Kuru descendant Duryodhana
saw many exquisite decorations in it
that he had not seen
in *nāga-nagara* Hastināpura.

3 One day Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
entered an area made of crystal
and, thinking it was water,
he lifted up

4 His dress. The rājā soon realised
his mistake and wandered
all over the sabhā much mortified
at his folly.

5 Another time he thought
a pool of clear water,
filled with crystal lotuses,
to be land,
and fell in it fully dressed
(continuedVaiśampāyana)

6 Mahā-muscled Bhima saw Suyodhana-Duryodhana
and guffawed out loud.
The servants also joined
in the merriment.

7 Fresh clothes were brought for him
on rājā Yudhiṣṭhira's orders.
Seeing his discomfiture.
mahā-powerful Bhīma,

8 Arjuna, the twins Nakula and Sahadeva,
all laughed loudly,
Quick-to-take-offence Duryodhana smarted
under their insult.

9 But he hid his feelings.
He did not even look up at them.
On another occasion,
they again saw him lift

10 His dress, mistaking land for water –
and they roared
with laughter. Once he mistook a crystal door
for open space,

11 Stepped into it and banged his head.
His mind reeled.
On another occasion, he mistook open space
for a shut door,
stretched his hand to push it open,
and fell flat.

12 And once, he come on a door
that was open but,
thinking it shut,
he walked away puzzled.

13 Lord of the earth Janamejaya!
This happened to him again and again.
And when Duryodhana saw all the wealth
amassed in the mahā-yajña,

14 He decided it best
that he return
to his capital Hastināpura,
and asked the Pāṇḍavas' leave to go.

15 On his way back, he kept thinking
of all those incidents,
and his mind, disturbed
by visions of the enormous wealth
of the Pāṇḍavas,
turned to evil thoughts.

16 O great Kuru descendant Janamejaya!
When Duryodhana saw
Pṛtha-Kuntī's sons happy
and all the world's kings paying homage

17 To them, young and old serving
the mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas delightedly,
their prosperity and grandeur growing –
then the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Duryodhana,
felt strangely unwell.

18 The only thoughts that kept coming to him
on his way back home
were of the lovely sabhā
and Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira.

19 So obsessed was he
with these thoughts
that he did not disclose them
even to Subala's son Śakuni.

20 Śakuni noticed his uneasiness
and said to him, "You sigh so deeply,
Duryodhana, what's the matter?
Don't you feel well?"

21 Duryodhana replied: "Uncle, when I see
the world in Yudhiṣṭhira's control
with help from the white-horse-riding
mahā-ātmaned Arjuna,

22 When I recall the mahā-Rājasūya
of Pṛthā-Kunti's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
a yajña like that of the lord of gods
Śakra-Indra,

23 I burn with indignation day and night.
I dry up inside
like a pool
in the heat of summer.

24 Imagine, when Śiśupāla was killed
by the Sātvata chief Krishna,
not one king rose to take up
his cause!

25 It looked as if the Pāṇḍava fire
had laid waste all those rājās.
How else could they forgive
the unforgivable?

26 Vāsudeva-Krishna's mahā-unjust action
could succeed only
because he had the combined strengths
of the mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas on his side.

27 Many kings came
with many expensive tokens of tribute,
and honoured Yudhiṣṭhira
like a bunch of moneylending Vaiśyas.

28 When I recall the glory
of the Pāṇḍavas,
I burn with anger.
I know I should not, but I burn!
I seem to be
fiercely aflame."

29 Burning Duryodhana made up his mind
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and said
to the prince of Gāndhāra Śakuni:

30 "I"ll kill myself, I'll jump into fire,
I'll drink poison,
I'll drown myself.
I can't bear to live.

31 Is there a self-respecting man alive
who can smile
and accept his enemies prospering,
himself stagnating?

32 What kind of man am I,
who can bear all this?
Am I a woman, a non-woman?
A man? a non-man?

33 Is there a man alive
who will not feel feverish
seeing their great wealth,
their world-lordship, their yajña?

34 I cannot singlehanded hope
ever to get such prosperity.
I don't see anyone helping me.
Best to die.

35 When I see that boundless success
of Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
I realise the futility
of human effort,
I see the supremacy
of destiny.

36 Son of Subala, I tried earlier
to get rid of him.
I failed. Now he shines in glory
like a lotus.

37 Effort is futile, fate is supreme.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons decline
even as Pṛtha-Kuntī's sons
prosper.

38 Their prosperity, their sabhā,
the mocking laughter of their guards,
and their underlings – I burn,
Śakuni, I am on fire!

39 I am unwell, uncle –
grief and bitterness rack me.
Uncle, go to Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and tell him this."

SECTION FORTY-EIGHT

1 "What point is there, Duryodhana,
in burning with indignation?
Yudhiṣṭhira and the Pāṇḍavas are enjoying
the prosperity of good fortune.

2 Foe-crushing mahārāja,
you tried all kinds of plans
to kill them,
and, in spite of your

3 Best efforts, they escaped.
Fortune is on the side
of these Pāṇḍavas,"
replied Śakuni.

4 "They got Draupadi as wife,
and Drupada and his sons as allies;
Valiant Vāsudeva-Krishna helped them
take over the world.

5 The gods, anti-gods and humans
together cannot defeat refulgent Krishna,
who helps the Pāṇḍavas.
Why get upset over this?

6 They have received their ancestral share
of the kingdom,
and they have prospered by their enterprise.
Why get upset over this?

7 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna propitiated
the fire-god Agni and received
the Gāṇḍīva bow, two exhaustless quivers,
and other divine weapons.

8 With what splendid bow and his prowess,
he overran
the world's rulers and humbled them.
Why get upset over this?

9 He saved the Dānava anti-god Maya
from the great forest-fire,
and with his help Savyasācī-Arjuna constructed
the magnificent sabhā.

10 On Maya's orders,
fierce rākṣasas called Kiṁkaras
guard the assembly-hall.
Why get upset over this?

11 O Bharata-descendant
you complain there is none to help you.
This is not true.
Your brothers are all on your side.

12 The mahā bow-expert Droṇa
and his son Aśvatthāman,
the charioteer's son Rādheya-Karṇa,
the mahā-chariot-hero Gautama's son Kṛpa,

13 I and my brothers,
king Somadatti-Bhūriśravas –
we are your allies.
You can conquer the world with our help."

14 "Rājā! If you say so,
then I should have no difficulty
in conquering the Pāṇḍavas,"
said Duryodhana.

15 "And if I can defeat them,
all the mahā-wealth of the world is in my hands–
with all its kings
and that glittering sabhā!"

16 Śakuni replied: "Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
Vāsudeva-Krishna, Bhīma,
Yudhiṣṭhira, Nakula, Sahadeva, Drupada
and his sons –

17 Even all the gods cannot defeat these heroes.
They have tremendous bows,
they are mahā-chariot-warriors,
they know the use
of all war-weapons,
they are invincible.

18 Still, rājā, I know of a means
by which Yudhiṣṭhira can be defeated.
Listen carefully,
and make use of it."

19 Duryodhana replied: "Uncle,
if the Pāṇḍavas can be defeated
by cautiously using
my relatives and friends,
and other mahā-ātmaned people,
I will listen to your plan."

20 Śakuni said, "O Indra-among-rājās,
Kuntī's son is fond of gambling,
but doesn't know how to play.
Invite him; he won't refuse.

21 I am expert at dice-throw.
There's none as good as I,
not in all the three worlds.
Invite Yudhiṣṭhira.

22 O Kaurava-descendant, I can promise you,
O bull- among-men,
with my skill, I will soon have Yudhiṣṭhira parted
from his kingdom and his wealth – all for you.

23 But first, Duryodhana,
go to your father
and get his permission.
I promise you, Yudhiṣṭhira's finished."

24 Duryodhana replied: "Saubala-Śakuni!
You go and persuade
the Kuru monarch Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
I cannot do it."

SECTION FORTY-NINE

1 Having discovered Gāndhārī's son
Duryodhana's feelings
about rājā Yudhiṣṭhira's Rājasūya mahā-yajña
from the way Duryodhana spoke,

2 And moved by a desire
to please him,
Subala's son Śakuni,
accompanied by Duryodhana,

3 Approached mahā-wisdom-inseeing
Dhṛtarāṣṭra seated on his throne;
Śakuni went to him
and said:

4 "Mahārāja! Lord of men!
Duryodhana these days is unwell –
he is pale and weak,
and sick with anxiety.

5 Why not enquire what is wrong
with the health
of your eldest son?
He seems to be worried by enemies."

6 "Duryodhana," asked Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"my son, why are you unwell?
Tell me, if you think
I should be told.

7 Śakuni informs me
that you are weak and pale.
I have thought about this,
and cannot imagine why.

8 All the wealth of the palace
is at your disposal, my son.
Your brothers and our relatives
have not ever harmed you.

9 You wear the finest robes,
you eat nourishing meat,
you ride splendid horses –
what makes you so pale and weak?

10 Beautiful girls, luxurious beds,
palatial mansions,
and pleasure-groves are available
for your enjoyment.

11 You have them at your command,
like the gods do.
Invincible hero, my son;
what is afflicting you?

12 The foods that are enjoyed in heaven
by Vāsava-Indra
are here prepared for you, my son.
Why are you depressed?

13 You have been well instructed by Kṛpa
in the six branches of the Vedas,
in prosody,
the eight branches of grammar.

14 The science of war-weapons
has been taught you
by Halayudha-Balarāma, Kṛpa and Droṇa.
Singers and bards

15 Chant your praises.
You are respected for your intelligence.
You are my eldest son and heir.
Tell me, my son, what is wrong?"

16 Anger-inflamed Duryodhana listened
to his father's gentle enquiry
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
and replied:

17 "Yes, I eat and dress well,
but all the time
I feel miserable because I am impatient,
I am intolerant.

18 The ruler who vanquishes his enemies
and lives peacefully,
having freed his subjects from fear,
can be said to be happy.

19 O great Bhārata! Contentment destroys prosperity,
and so does smugness.
Fear weakens; so does pity.
All these frustrate progress.

20 When I see Yudhiṣṭhira prosper, I suffer;
nothing seems to please me.
The glory of Kuntī's son
gnaws at me.

21 He is not here before me now,
but I see him, that son of Kuntī, clearly,
in all his glory.
This makes me sad and pale.

22 Yudhiṣṭhira invited eighty-eight
thousand *snātaka* Brahmins
of the domestic order.
To each he gifted thirty maids.

23 Every day, ten thousand other Brahmins
ate sumptuous meals
from golden plates
in his palace.

24 The king of Kāmboja sent him
hundreds of thousands
of black, grey and red *kadali*-deerskins
and blankets

25 Other kings brought him
hundreds and thousands of she-elephants,
horses and cows,
and thirty thousand she-camels.

26 Heaps and heaps of diamonds
and other precious stones
were presented
to the son of Kuntī.

27 I have never heard of,
I have never seen such wealth
as I saw
at Pāṇḍu's son's-yajña.

28 O lord of the world! When I recall all that wealth,
I feel depressed.
I cannot get it off my mind,
and I suffer.

29 Hundreds of Brahmin dependents
of Yudhiṣṭhira,
bringing three thousand million in tribute,
arrived at his gates.

30 They even brought ghee with them
in golden pots.
They were so numerous they could not all pass
through the gates.

31 Lord of the ocean Varuṇa
brought for him, in copper vessels,
honey churned in his waters
and sweeter than the honey
that goddesses bring
to Śakra-Indra.

32 Vāsudeva-Krishna sprinkled Yudhiṣṭhira
with holy water brought
in a thousand gem-inlaid gold jars
and poured in a conch.

33 When I saw all this,
I shivered as if I had fever.
The gold jars had water
from the seas

34 Of the east,
and water from the seas
of the west and south.
Only birds inhabit the northern seas,

35 Yet Arjuna succeeded in going there
and collecting a large sum as tribute.
And listen to me –
A strange thing happened at the yajña.

36 When a hundred thousand Brahmins
ate meals on any day,
special conches
were sounded in chorus.

37 O Bhārata descendant! I heard them blown often;
indeed, many times daily.
A hundred thousand Brahmins!
A horripilating thought!

38 Mahārāja! The area of the sabhā,
filled with invited monarchs,
looked as lovely as a cloudless sky
sprinkled with stars.

39 Mahārāja! All of them came to the yajña
bringing lavish gifts
for the intelligent son of Pāṇḍu,
Yudhiṣṭhira

40 The kings became like Vaiśyas,
distributing food to Brahmins.
Rājā of the gods Indra,
Varuṇa, Yama do not have

41 The wealth that rājā Yudhiṣṭhira has;
the Guhyaka lord Kubera does not have it.
This is what burns me day and night.
I have no peace.

42 If I cannot get that wealth,
I will never find peace.
Either I defeat them in battle
with my arrows –

43 Or let them kill me,
and I will get the peace of death.
O foe-chastising father!
What is the point living as I do?
Rājā! The Pāṇḍavas prosper –
and we are where we are!"

44 "Truth-speaking hero,"
said Śakuni, "listen to me.
I have a means of getting you
the Pāṇḍava hoard of riches.

45 I am good at dice.
I can foretell throws,
I know what and when to stake.
I am an expert.

46 Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira loves a dice-game,
though he's still a learner.
If you invite him to gamble or to battle,
he will come.

47 My lord! I could defeat him in every throw:
I know the trick.
I will win his wealth
for you to enjoy. Invite him."

48 Rājā Duryodhana listened
to Śakuni and,
without wasting my time,
said to Dhṛtarāṣṭra:

49 "Rājā, Śakuni is an expert at dice;
he wants to play
with the Pāṇḍavas.
He needs your permission."

50 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said,
"I must first consult
mahā-wise Kṣattā-Vidura, my minister.
I will let you know.

51 Vidura has foresight,
he abides by dharma;
he will know what is best for both
in this matter."

52 "O Indra among rājās, if you go to him,"
said Duryodhana,
"he will argue you out of it.
And I will kill myself.

53 When I am dead, O rājā,
be happy with Vidura.
Enjoy the earth's pleasures.
You won't need me."

54 When Dhṛtarāṣṭra heard
these bitter words,
he decided to humour Duryodhana;
he summoned a servant and said:

55 “Call the architects and order
  a spacious, beautiful sabhā
to be constructed, with a hundred doors
  and a thousand pillars.

56 Bring carpenters and carvers;
  decorate its walls
with gems and precious stones;
  make it comfortable
and eye-pleasing.
  Inform me when it is ready.”

57 Mahārāja Janamejaya! Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
  after deciding to please Duryodhana,
sent servants to Vidura summoning him
  to the court.

58 He never took a final decision
  without Vidura’s approval.
He knew the evils of gambling,
  but he loved his son.

59 When Vidura got news of this,
  he feared Kali-yuga had come.
He saw the door
  of the doom
of the Kuru race opening;
  he hurried to Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

60 He approached his mahā-ātmaned elder brother,
  praṇama-ed him
by lowering his head at Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s feet,
  and said:

61 “Rājā, I cannot approve.
  You must act in a way
that leads to no conflict
  between your sons.”

62 “Kṣattā-Vidura,” replied Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
  “why should there be any conflict
between my sons
  if the gods do not want it?

63 Auspicious or inauspicious, beneficial or otherwise,
let a friendly dice-game be played. It is fated.

64 O Bharata descendant,
with Drona, Bhīṣma, you and I present,
no evil can happen,
even if so destined.

65 Go, take a wind-swift chariot,
and rush
to Khāṇḍavaprastha today.
Bring Yudhiṣṭhira here.

66 Vidura, I tell you,
my mind is made up.
Do not argue. I believe in fate.
It is so fated."

67 Wise Vidura heard; he thọught,
No, it is not.
Vidura sadly went
to rich-in-wisdom-Āpageya-Bhīṣma.

SECTION FIFTY

1 “What happened? (Janamejaya asked)
How did the dice-game
lead to the mahā-ruin
of my Pāṇḍava ancestors?

2 O best of Veda-knowers,
which rājās were present in the sabhā?
Who approved?
Who were against it?

3 Best of the twice-born,
tell me in detail
everything that happened that led
to the doom of the world.”

4 When the king asked him
(said Sauti),
Vyāsa’s disciple Veda-wise Vaiśampāyana
narrated all that took place.

5 Noble Bharata mahārāja
(continued Vaiśampāyana), listen.
Because you want to hear it,
I will tell you all.

6 Aware of Vidura’s objection,
Ambikā’s son Dhṛtarāṣṭra
said to Duryodhana
in private:

7 “Son of Gāndhārī, Vidura says
this dice-game will harm us all.
Mahā-wise Vidura
has never advised me wrongly.

8 I know that Vidura’s advice
is meant for my welfare.
My son, it is meant
for your welfare too. Think.

9 Vidura is wise – he is learned
in the sciences and mysteries of life
which Vāsava-Indra's guru
Bhagavān Bṛhaspati,
most intelligent of men,
taught the chief of the gods.

10 I have always followed his advice,
my son.
Wise Vidura is regarded
as the greatest of the Kauravas,

11 As mahā-learned Uddhava is of the Vṛṣṇis.
Give up this idea
of a dice-game.
Gambling leads to quarrels,

12 Quarrels break up kingdoms.
Give up gambling.
You have everything that one can have
from parents –

13 High rank, ancestral wealth,
learning in the sastras;
a careful upbringing
with all our affection.

14 You are the eldest of your brothers;
our heir.
Is this not enough for happiness?
Food, dresses, that others

15 Cannot get – are all yours, O mahā-muscled one.
Why are you discontented?
My son, ruling over your kingdom
with its people and wealth,

16 You shine like Indra himself in heaven.
Intelligent Duryodhana,
what is the real cause
of your depression? Tell me."

17 "I am utterly useless, father,"
replied Duryodhana.
"I eat well, dress well,
but I see my enemies prosper.
Only a rascal shows no indignation
when his foes prosper.

18 My ordinary prosperity gives me no happiness,
O Indra-among-rājās,
when I see the incandescent prosperity
of Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira.

19 Death must find me
really hard to kill –
or how should I be living
after seeing all the kings of the world
brought under the sway
of Yudhiṣṭhira?

20 The Nīpas, Citrakas, Kukuras,
Kāraskaras, and Lohajaṅghas
live in Yudhiṣṭhira's palace
like his slaves.

21 The Himālayas, the ocean,
the shores and other gem-producing regions
acknowledge their inferiority
to his palace.

22 Lord of the earth! Since I was the eldest
and foremost in the family,
Yudhiṣṭhira gave me charge of receiving
the gems and jewel-gifts.

23 O descendant of Bharata,
never have I seen
anything comparable
to the magnificent wealth there.

24 My hands wearied
accepting all those presents.
The kings had to wait
until I shook off my tiredness.

25 With crystal brought from the lake of Bindu,
Maya designed
a lotus-filled flooring
which I mistook for water.

26 When I lifted my robe, wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma laughted at me.
He thought I was a simpleton,
he saw I had so few ornaments.

27 Had I the power, O lord of men,
I could have killed Vṛokodara-Bhīma
then and there.
If we try to kill him now,

28 We'll suffer the fate of Śiśupāla.
O Bharata descendant,
how can I forget that laughter?
It torments me.

29 One day I made another mistake.
I came to a pool,
thought it was flooring,
and, O lord of men, I fell in.

30 Krishna and Arjuna
laughed out loud.
Draupadī and the other women giggled.
Oh, the humiliation!

31 Because my robes were wet,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira ordered his servants
to get me a new dress.
Oh the insult!

32 O lord of men! Another silly mistake!
I tried to enter
through a door that looked like one
but wasn't one,

33 And I banged my forehead and hurt myself.
The Pāṇḍava twins came
and helped me up with both hands,
showing great sympathy.

34 Sahadeva kept grinning,
    and saying again and again,
'O rājā, here's the door.
    This way, please.'

35 And Bhīma, O lord of men,
    Bhīma guffawed and said,
'Son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
    here's the door. This way.'

36 I had never even heard the names
    of many of the gems
I saw in that palace.
    This also is what torments me."

SECTION FIFTY-ONE

1 “Great Bharata descendant,”
continued Duryodhana,
“let me describe to you the lavish presents
the Pāṇḍava received.

2 Believe me, I could hardly
believe my eyes
seeing what I saw. Let me give you
all the details.

3 The king of Kāmboja brought skins,
woollen blankets,
soft mice-fur and cat-wool,
all gold-threaded;

4 Also three hundred partridge-coloured
and parrot-nosed horses,
three hundred camels,
and three hundred she-asses,
all fattened on *pīlu, śamī,*
and *iṅguda*-fodder.

5 Mahārāja! Many Brahmins who were engaged
in cattle-rearing, and other menial pursuits,
in the hope of pleasing
mahā-ātmaned Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,

6 Waited at the gates
with hundreds of millions in tribute,
but could not enter.
Hundreds of other Brahmins,

7 All wealthy land-owners of territories
given by Yudhiṣṭhira,
arrived with golden, ghee-filled,
glittering jars.

8 Though they came
with such luxurious gifts,
they could not be given admission,
because of the crowds.

9 Rājā Kuṇinda, best of the twice-born,
presented a conch
to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
with great affection.

10 The brothers passed on the conch to Arjuna.
It was studded with a thousand gold pieces
and ringed with gold-filigree.
It shone richly.
Dreadful-deed-door Bībhatsu-Arjuna
accepted it

11 Viśvakarman had personally fashioned it;
it was a delight to behold.
Dharma-in-person Yudhiṣṭhira
namaskara-ed it again and again.

12 When offered food-homage,
the conch sounded by itself.
Without warning it sounded,
and all the kings fell on the ground.

13 Only Dhṛṣṭadyumna, the five Pāṇḍavas,
Satyaki and Keśava-Krishna
remained standing,
observing the others.

14 Seeing us fall, all of them chuckled.
Bībhatsu-Arjuna,
pleased, presented five hundred
splendid bullocks
to a noble Brahmin.
They had gold-plated horns.

15 King Sumukha presented
enormous wealth
to Ajātaśatru foe-less Yudhiṣṭhira,
and king Kuṇinda gave dressess and gold.

16 The rājā of Kāṣmīra sent bunches
of sweet, luscious grapes,
and arrived bringing
other costly presents for Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira.

17 The Yavanas came with gifts
of magnificent horses,
exquisitely soft
and attractive woollen blankets,

18 Many varieties of precious stones,
and luxurious robes.
Even for them there was
hardly any space.

19 King-Śrutayus of Kaliṅga presented
a giant diamond.
The kings of the south
brought dresses, conches,

20 Gems and an uncounted number
of other expensive gifts,
all for the yajña
of Yudhiṣṭhira.

21 King Malaya for the Pāṇḍavas
brought ninetysix different presents,
each a paragon
of expensive beauty.

22 The kings of Cola and Kerala
brought sandalwood,
agaru-wood, pearls, *vaidūrya*-gems,
and the *citraka* gem.

23 King Aśmaka gave ten thousand
milch cows with calves,
with golden neck-chains,
gold-plated horns, and jar-like udders.

24 The raja of the Sindhus
gave fifty thousand of the finest horses
of his kingdom,
all with golden garlands.

25 The king of the Sauvīras
gave over three hundred
elephant-pulled chariots,
made of gold and gem-work,

26 Bright like the noonday sun,
absolutely indescribable.
Besides these, he offered
many other presents too.

27 The rājā of Avanti brought
a variety of gems,
necklaces, armlets,
ten thousand servant-maids;

28 With all of them he waited
outside the city gates,
eager to go inside
and catch a glimpse of Yudhiṣṭhira.

29 The king of the Daśārṇas,
the rājā of Cedi
and Śūrasena brought magnificent presents
for Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira.

30 The rājā of Kāśī joyfully
gave eighty thousand cows,
eight hundred elephants,
and countless gems.

31 Kṛtakṣana of Videha
and Bṛhadbala of Kosala
each brought fourteen thousand horses
as gifts.

32 King Śaibya and others,
together with the king of Trigarta,
brought gifts of pearls,
necklaces and dresses.

33 A hundred thousand lovely,
slim-waisted, long-haired
and golden-ornamented girls
of Kārpāsika,

34 Mahārāja, hundreds of *raṅku*-deer skins
fit for the best Brahmins,
and horses from Gāndhāra,
were brought by the sea-coast Śūdra chiefs.

35 The dwellers near the ocean,
and those who lived
on crops dependent on monsoons
and river-waters,

36 The dwellers of forests,
the inhabitants of countries
on the other side of the sea,
had to wait at the gates,

37 Though they had brought with them
lavish gifts
of asses, goats, camels, flower-honey,
blankets, and jewels.

38 The mighty ruler of Prāgjyotiṣa
and the Mleccha rājā,
the mahā-chariot-hero Bhagadatta also waited
at the gate with many Yavanas.

39 He had brought as gifts
some of the finest horses
of the world,
noble-bred, wind-swift creatures.

40 In fact, Bhagadatta left after some time;
before doing so,
he gave away ivory-handled,
diamond-studded swords.

41 So many kinds of people came
from so many lands! –
some two-eyed, some three,
some with eyes in the middle
of their foreheads, the Auṣṇīkas,
Romakas, the cannibals,

42 And those of the one-legged race –
I saw them all waiting
at the gates. They had brought
with them, as gifts,

43 Multi-coloured black-necked
and massive-bodied asses
who ran like the wind
but were docile.

44 Offering all these as tribute,
they gained admission.
The one-legged people brought horses,
some firefly-red,

45 Some white, some rainbow-hued, some cloud-dark,
but all swift as thought.
They brought with them
large gifts of gold also.

46 The Cīnas, Śakas, Uḍras,
the forest-dwelling barbarians,
the Haras, Hunas,
Kṛṣṇas and Himālayans,

47 The Nīpas, and sea-coast dwellers –
all had to wait
outside the city gates.
They brought, as tribute,

48 Ten thousand black-necked asses
capable of running
two hundred miles daily,
all of then excellently trained;

49 Pleasing to look at, pleasing to touch,
woollen blankets
made in Cīna,
and other silk-thread spreads,

50 Thousands and thousands
of lotus-tinted dresses,
smooth and soft, not made of cotton;
thousands of dresses

51 Of softest sheepskin;
sharp swords and daggers,
battle-axes and hatchets
made in the western territories,

52 All kinds of subtle perfumes,
jewels and gold-work.
All of them, however,
had to wait at the city-gates.

53 The Śakas, Tuśāras, Kaṅkas,
Romakas and horned men,
who brought with them gifts
of massive-sized elephants,

54 Ten thousand horses
and hundreds of crores of gold pieces –
they too waited
outside the city gates.

55 Fabulously expensive carpets, beds,
multi-coloured coats-of-armour
studded with gold,
jewels and silver,

56 Weapons of all possible kinds,
chariots of all sizes
exquisitely manufactured,
decorated with gold-work,

57 Trained horses dressed in tiger-skin,
expensive blankets
to caparison elephants,
jewels and gold,

58 Long arrows, short arrows,
and many other weapons –
these were gifted by the eastern kings
at mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira's yajña."

SECTION FIFTY-TWO

1 “Defectless one,” continued Duryodhana,
“let me proceed with my listing
of the varied wealth
brought by the earth’s rājās.

2 Those who live on the banks
of the Śailoda which flows
between Meru and Mandara
and enjoy the shade
of the clumps of *kīcaka* bamboo
that grow there,

3 That is, the Khasas, Ekāsanas,
Arhas, Prādaras,
Dīrghaveṇus, Pārdasas, Kulindas,
Taṅganas and Parataṅganas,

4 Brought heaps of gold in huge jars –
gold dug up
by colonies of ants
and therefore known as ant-gold.

5 The fierce mountain tribes
brought soft, black yak-tails,
and also moon-white ones,
and sweet-honey

6 Made from flowers growing
on the Himālayan slopes,
and flower-garlands
from the northern lands of the Kurus,

7 Medicinal herbs
from as far north as Kailāsa;
and they all waited with bowed heads
at the gates of Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira.

8 I saw with my own eyes
the skin-wearing,
fruit-and-root-eating dwellers
on the Himālayan slopes,

9 The cruel, fierce-weaponed Kirātas
of the sunrise hills,
of the coastal Kāruṣa territories
and of the Lauhitya hills.

10 They brought large quantities
of sandalwood, black aloes,
precious skins, wealth and perfumes,
as well as

11 Ten thousand Kīrāta slave-girls,
and hundreds
of beautiful-plumaged birds
and never-heard-of animals;

12 Also they brought large amounts
of mountain-mined gold.
They also waited patiently
at the city-gates.

13 The Kīrātas, Daradas, Darvas, Śuras,
Yamakas, Audumbaras,
Durvibhāgas, the Pāradas,
and the Bahlīkas,

14 The Kāśmīras, Kumāras, Ghorakas,
Haṁsakāyanas, Śibis,
Trigartas, Yaudheyas, the Bhadras,
the Kekayas,

15 The Ambaṣṭhas, Kaukuras, Tārkṣyas,
Vastrapas, Pahlavas,
Vaśātalas, Mauleyas, the Kṣudrakas,
the Mālavas,

16 The Śauṇḍīkas, Kukkuras, Śakas,
Aṅgas and Baṅgas,
the Puṇḍras and Śāṇavatyas,
the Gayas –

17 All these noble-born, fortune-favoured,
magnificent Kṣatriyas,
skilled in warfare, brought enormous tribute
for Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira.

18 The Baṅgas, Kaliṅgas, Magadhas,
Tāmralīptas, Puṇḍrakas,
Dauvālikas, Sāgarakas, Patrorṇas,
the Śaiśavas,

19 The Karṇaprāvaraṇas,
were all told by the gate-keepers,
on rājā Yudhiṣṭhira's orders, that only those
who brought huge tribute could enter.

20 Each therefore gave one thousand
plough-tusked, gold-girdled,
lotus-hue-cover-caparisoned elephants,
dark-skinned,

21 Dust-filmed. All the elephants
were brought from Kāmyaka lake;
they were gentle, well-trained.
The kings were admitted.

22 Other kings too, from other lands,
came to the yajña,
all bringing huge hoards
of jewels and gold.

23 Rājā Citraratha, friend of Vāsava-Indra,
offered as presents
four hundred horses
swift as the wind itself.

24 The gandharva Tumburu brought
one hundred horses
soft-green-hued like a mango leaf,
all gold-caparisoned.

25 The rājā of Śūkara,
a Kuru descendant,
gave many hundreds
of magnificent elephants.

26 Virāṭa, king of Matsya,
presented Yudhiṣṭhira
with two thousand
gold adorned elephants.

27 King Vasudāna of Pāṁśu
presented twentysix elephants
and two thousand
gold-adorned horses,

28 All of them were young and swift,
strong and healthy.
He gave more wealth also
to Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira.

29 King Yajñasena presented to Yudhiṣṭhira
fourteen thousand slave girls
and ten thousand servants
and their wives,

30 Hundreds of elephants, twentysix chariots
yoked to elephants –
indeed, all his kingdom.
Vāsudeva-Krishna, for Kirīṭin-Arjuna,

31 Gifted fourteen thousand splendid elephants.
Krishna is the ātman
of Pārtha-Arjuna, and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
the ātman of Krishna.

32 Whatever Arjuna says,
Krishna will gladly do.
Krishna can give up heaven
for Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's sake.

33 Partha-Arjuna can sacrifice his life
for Krishna.
Though countless golden pots
with scented sandalpaste

34 From the Malaya hills,
and heaps of aloe-wood
from the Dardura hills,
jewels and gold-embroidered robes

35 Were brought by the kings
of Cola and Pāṇḍava,
they were not admitted inside.
Vaidūrya gems and pearls,

36 And hundreds of elephant-covers
were presented by Siṁhala.
Many dark-skinned, copper-eyed men,
in gem-studded robes,

37 Had to wait at the city gates.
To please Yudhiṣṭhira,
Brahmins and defeated Ksatriyas,
Vaiśyas and Śūdras,

38 Offered large gifts.
All the Mlecchas respectfully turned up.
All kinds of men,
good, bad, and mediocre,

39 Made Yudhiṣṭhira's palace
glitter with variety and colour,
till nothing like it
seemed to exist.

40 When I think of all those
incomparable presents
that were offered to Yudhiṣṭhira,
I want to die!

41 And now, O lord of the earth,
let me tell you
about the innumerable attendants
of the Pāṇḍavas,

42 To whom Yudhiṣṭhira supplied
cooked and uncooked food.
Ten crores of elephant warriors
and horsemen;

43 One crore chariot-heroes and fort-soldiers.
In one place
the food is weighed,
in another cooked;

44 Distributed in a third place;
and everywhere
is the sound of merriment.
I cannot recall a single case

45 Of a person going without food,
drink, dress and ornament
in Yudhiṣṭhira's palace,
Eightyeight thousand *snātakas*

46 Were all dependent on him;
he gave each thirty servant maids.
Pleased, they prayed
for the ruin of his foes.

47 Ten thousand sex-controlling ascetics
feasted daily
from golden plates
in the palace of Yudhiṣṭhira.

48 O lord of the world! Yājñasenī-Draupadī personally,
herself not eating,
attends to everyone's meals,
including the dwarfs and the deformed.

49 Only two races do not pay homage
to Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira –
the Pāñcālas because they are related to him
by marriage,
and the Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis,
related by *sakhā* friendship.

SECTION FIFTY-THREE

1 The truth-devoted rājās, strict in mahā-vows,
immensely learned,
gifted in speaking,
knowing the Vedas and yajñas,

2 Rājās with humility and goodness,
illustrious dharmātmās,
properly anointed – all of them
paid Yudhiṣṭhira homage.

3 With my own eyes I saw
thousands of wild cows
with an equal number
of copper milking vessels,
brought as *dakṣiṇā* for Yudhiṣṭhira
by the earth's rulers.

4 Many kings with the greatest speed
personally fetched jars
of anointed water
to bathe Yudhiṣṭhira at the yajña.

5 Bāhlīka brought
a gold-ornamented chariot.
Sudakṣiṇa yoked four white Kāmboja horses
to it the chariot.

6 The mahā-powerful king Sunītha
fitted its axle,
and the king of Cedi adjusted
its flagstaff.

7 The king of the south fitted
the coat-of-mail,
and the Magadha king brought flowers
and the head-dress.
The mahā-archer Vasudāna waited
with a sixty-year old elephant;

8 The king of Matsya furnished the side-joints
of the golden chariot,
Ekalavya the shoes,
Avantī the sacred water,

9 Cekitāna held the quiver,
Kāśi the bow,
Śalya came with the sword, sheath,
and gold-worked straps.

10 Dhaumya and Vyāsa of mahā-tapasyā,
with Nārada,
Asita and Devala at the head,
sprinkled the sacred water.

11 The maharṣis sat joyfully,
watching the auspicious sprinkling ritual.
Like the seven ṛṣis
honouring Mahendra-Devendra-Indra,

12 The Veda-learned ṛṣis,
with Jamadagni's son Paraśurāma,
chanted mantras at the yajna
of the great *dakṣiṇā*-giver Yudhiṣṭhira.

13 Radiant-in-truth Sātyaki
held the royal umbrella
while Dhanañjaya-Arjuna and Bhīma
fanned Yudhiṣṭhira.

14 The twins Nakula and Sahadeva
held two exquisite yak-tail fans
presented by Prajāpati to Indra
in a previous *kalpa.*

15 Varuṇa, lord of waters, personally
brought a conch
that Visvakarman had made
out of a thousand gold pieces.

16 Krishna used this conch for bathing Yudhiṣṭhira
at the yajña's end.
I could hardly believe my eyes.
It is said, dear father,

17 That people go east, west, and south,
but only the birds go north –
but the Pāṇḍavas have been north too,
from where

18 They brought hundreds of auspicious conches.
When these were sounded,
I horripilated,
and the weaker kings fainted.

19 Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Sātyaki,
the Pāṇḍavas and Keśava-Krishna –
only they remained unaffected.
Seeing me

20 And the other kings bewildered
by the conch-blowing,
they laughed out loud.
Arjuna, delighted, presented

21 The chief Brahmins
five hundred bullocks
with gold-planted horns.
Rantideva, Nābhāga, Māndhātā, Manu,

22 The son of Vena called Pṛthu,
Bhagīratha, Yayāti, Nahuṣa –
none of these rājās
was Yudhiṣṭhira's equal.

23 Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
completed the Rājasūya yajña
and obtained the success
that Hariścandra once obtained.

24 My lord! When I see the success of Yudhiṣṭhira
equalling that of Hariścandra,
father, how do you expect me
to want to live any more?

25 A knot tied by a blind man
is sure to come loose.
O lord of men! Look at us –
our younger ones prosper, the elders decline!

26 O finest of the Kauravas! When I see all this,
I try to check myself, but I cannot.
I am lost in grief,
I am pale, I feel weak."

SECTION FIFTY-FOUR

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said,
"You are the eldest son,
born to my eldest wife.
Don't hate the Pāṇḍavas.
Hatred makes a man suffer
the agony of dying.

2 Bull-brave Bharata,
Yudhiṣṭhira is not the scheming type.
His wealth equals yours.
Your friends are his friends.
He does not hate you.
Why do you hate him?

3 You have as many friends
and allies as he.
My son, why do you covet his wealth?
Don't. Control yourself.

4 If you are eager to acquire
the honour of a yajña,
O bull-brave Bhārata, call the *ṛtviks*,
let them organise a sevenfold yajña.

5 This world, my son,
is a wish-fulfilling cow,
it is known also as the Hero's Wife.
If offers fruits to those
who try – and succeed.
If you try, you can enjoy her.

6 Perform your own yajña
and all the world's rājās
will bring you respect
and gems and gold.

7 But do not look greedily on others' wealth.
This is your svā-dharma.
To be content with what one has,
is happiness.

8 Not to covet others' wealth,
to mind one's own affairs,
to cherish what one possesses –
this is true greatness.

9 If adversity doesn't affect him,
if he struggles hard,
is humble, alert, and skilled –
such a man prospers.

10 The Pāṇḍavas are like your two arms;
why cut them off?
Don't start a family quarrel
by coveting a brother's wealth.

11 O rājā! Don't hate the Pāṇḍavas.
They are your brothers.
Their wealth is your wealth.
Tāta, my child, to quarrel with friends
is mahā-adharma.
Their grandfathers are yours too.

12 Bull-brave Bharata, give away wealth freely
in yajñas,
think of the good, enjoy feminine company,
and be at peace."

SECTION FIFTY-FIVE

1 Duryodhana replied,
"Does a spoon
know the taste of soup?
Does knowing the śāstras in theory
teach anything
of their real meaning?

2 You know everything,
why do you confuse me?
You and I are like two boats
tied to each other.
Don't you want your own good?
Are you on my side or no?

3 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons are doomed indeed,
if you advise caution.
To-be-done-now for you
is to-be-done-later.

4 To follow a guide who needs guidance
is to get really lost.
How can one find the right path
if one follows such a guide?

5 You are old, O rājā,
you are wise, you respect age,
you have your passions in check.
Don't confuse us further,
for we are sure
what we think is right.

6 Hasn't Bṛhaspati said that rājās are different
from other human beings?
Kings should be motivated
only by self-interest.

7 Mahārāja! Nothing succeeds like success
for a Kṣatriya.
Dharma or adharma – I don't know –
I know self-interest is right.

8 O bull-brave Bhārata! Like a charioteer
whipping his horses into submission,
the man who wants to subdue his foes
should be firm-willed.

9 Those who know what war is
say that any means,
secret or open, which crushes the enemy,
is the right means.
A sharp sword
is not the only war weapon.

10 King, tell me if there is any way
of telling friend from foe.
All I know is,
the man who hurts me is my enemy.

11 Rājā! They say discontent
is the starting-point of success.
I am discontented,
I am the best of men, I want to succeed.

12 Attachment to wealth is useless,
for earned and inherited wealth
can be stolen.
Such is royal dharma.

13 Śakra-Indra sliced off Namuci's head
after promising not to harm him ever.
He knew the eternal way
to deal with enemies.

14 Snakes swallow frogs and holed-up animals;
the earth swallows
peace-mongering rājās
and complacent Brahmins.

15 Lord of the world!
Enemies are not born, they become so.
Only people who have similar aims can fall apart,
not strangers.

16 To ignore a flourishing foe is foolish
It is like shortening one's own life
by encouraging
a fatal disease.

17 If a weak foe is allowed to flourish,
he will slowly devour you,
like white ants nibbling
first the roots, then the tree.

18 O descendant of Ajamīḍha,
O descendant of Bharata,
do not accept any enemy's success.
Consider it a burden.

19 A man who wants his own success,
prospers in his family,
like the body growing
from the moment it is born.

20 So covet, like I do,
the wealth of the Pāṇḍavas.
I will soon find out
one way or the other where I stand:
either I'll get what I want,
or I'll die fighting.

21 Lord of the world! Who wants to live anyway,
with the Pāṇḍavas daily prospering,
and we daily declining?
Not I."

SECTION FIFTY-SIX

1 Śakuni said,
"Give me a chance,
and I will defeat Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira
in a dice-game, and end your grief.

2 O rājā! Send for Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira.
A clever man who knows how to play
can quickly defeat
a fumbling novice.

3 O Bharata descendant, betting is my bow,
the dice are my arrows,
dice marks my bow-strings,
the dice-board my chariot."

4 "Śakuni," said Duryodhana,
"is a dice-wizard, O rājā.
He will help us get Pāṇḍu's son's wealth.
Give him permission."

5 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said,
"I always follow what my brother,
mahā-ātmaned Vidura, advises.
I must first consult him."

6 Duyodhana countered, "Vidura will talk you out of it.
Vidura seeks only the welfare
of the Pāṇḍavas.
He doesn't care for mine, O Kaurava.

7 Do not depend on others.
Make up your own mind – don't follow his.
O delighter of the Kauravas!
No two people have identical thoughts.

8 The fool who avoids taking any kind of risk
because he's afraid,
is worthless,
like a rain drenched straw-mat.

9 Disease and death don't wait
for a man to prosper.
Let us act now –
while we have life and passion in us."

10 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said,
"My son, I don't like the idea
of making strong men our enemies.
Hostility affects our relations –
it too is a weapon,
though not of steel.

11 Prince! What you are thinking of doing
is a step towards outright war –
what you think is a blessing
is actually loaded with danger.
Once it starts,
it will end with swords and arrows."

12 Duryodhana said,
"Dice-games are nothing new.
What's so vicious and warlike
in a dice-game?
Give Śakuni permission,
and order the sabhā readied.

13 That game will be heaven's door to us!
All joy will be ours!
Gambling is a game
that makes both sides equal.
Let the Pāṇḍavas gamble with us!"

14 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said, "No.
Your words do not please me.
But do what you like, O Indra-among-men.
You will repent later.
Words so full of adharma
can never prosper.

15 Vidura has foreseen this;
he is learned and wise.
The mahā-fearful doom of the Kṣatriyas
seems to be fated."

16 Saying this (continued Vaiśampāyana),
the wise rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra was fooled by fate.
Fate weakened his will,
fate made him give in to his son.
He called his attendants,
and said:

17 “Order the immediate construction
of a splendid sabhā
to be called the Crystal-Gate Palace.
It will have one thousand
gold-and *vaidūrya*-embossed pillars;
it will be two miles square.”

18 Thousands of the finest craftsmen
had the palace built in no time.
All kinds of magnificent decorations
were brought.

19 They informed king Dhṛtarāṣṭra
that the palace was ready,
it was elegant, soothing,
gem-studded, carpet-filled.

20 Learned Indra-among-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra
said to his chief minister, Vidura,
“Go, summon Prince Yudhiṣṭhira.
I want him here, now.

21 Let him bring his brothers too;
let them see this grand sabhā,
full of jewels
and beds and carpets.
And make preparations
for a friendly game of dice.”

SECTION FIFTY-SEVEN

1 Lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra
knew the mind of his son
and left it all to fate.
This is how he acted.

2 Foremost-of-wise-men Vidura
did not agree
with his brother Dhṛtarāṣṭra's decision;
he said:

3 "O Indra-among-men, I am not happy.
Do not do this.
You will destroy our race.
This gambling match
will make the brothers fall out,
and discord will grow."

4 Dhṛtarāṣṭra replied: 'Kṣattā-Vidura!
I believe in fate.
With fate on my side,
I am not troubled.
The universe is not free.
The Creator made it,
but it moves
under the decree of fate.

5 Go, Vidura, to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
and tell the invincible son of Kuntī
that I order him
to be here with us."

SECTION FIFTY-EIGHT

1 Vaiśampāyana continued: Against his will,
Vidura yoked gentle, patient, swift horses
and left for the palace
of the learned Pāṇḍavas.

2 Mahā-intelligent Vidura took the shortest route;
when he arrived,
Brahmins welcomed him,
and he hurried in.

3 In the palace that glittered like Kubera's,
dharmātmā Vidura
went straight
to Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira.

4 The maha-atmaned foe-less descendant of Ajamīḍha,
dedicated-to-truth Yudhiṣṭhira
greeted Vidura, and asked about
Dhṛtarāṣṭra

5 Yudhiṣṭhira said: "Vidura,
you look preoccupied. Are you well?
Do Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons obey him?
Are his people contented?"

6 Vidura replied: "The mahā-ātmaned rājāis well.
He reigns like Indra.
His sons obey him.
He basks in his glory.

7 The rājā of the Kauravas ordered me to enquire
about your peace and health,
and to give you this message:
'Your cousin-brother's newly-built sabhā
equals yours in grandeur.
Come and see it.

8 And when you come,
play a friendly game of dice
with your cousin-brothers;
the Kauravas await you.'

9 Rājā! There you will meet
many gamblers, –
all professional players summoned
by mahā-minded Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
I have come to tell you this.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra commands it."

10 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "Kṣattā-Vidura,
gambling leads to quarrels.
Knowing this,
should one agree to gamble?
What do you think?
We will follow your advice."

11 Vidura replied, "In my opinion,
gambling is the root of ruin.
I tried to dissuade the rājā:
but he insisted
I bring this message.
Knowing this, do what you think is best."

12 Yudhiṣṭhira asked,
"Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons apart,
which professionals will be present?
I ask you this, O Vidura –
tell me who are the men against whom
we will have to stake thousands?"

13 Vidura replied: "Cool, skilled,
all-risking Śakuni, rājā of Gāndhāra;
Viviṁśati, Citrasena,
rājā Satyavrata,
Purumitra and Jaya
will be the other players."

14 "It seems," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"that some of the most fearful,
most skilled and desperate professionals
are pitted against us.
The universe is not free.
The Creator made it,
but it moves
under the decree of fate.

15 Vidura, I do not want to gamble,
even though Dhṛtarāṣṭra orders me,
even though I know a father
wishes his son's welfare.
Vidura, *you* advise us
what to do.

16 I don't want to gamble.
I will not gamble,
unless Śakuni challenges me.
If he challenges me,
I will accept the challenge.
I have firmly vowed this."

17 With these words (Vaiśampāyana continued)
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
made preparations for the journey.
Next day, accompanied by Draupadī
and other ladies,
he left for Hastināpura.

18 "Like flashing flame blinding the eyes,
fate blinds clear thinking.
Man is tied, one might say,
to a rope,
and pulled any way
that fate wishes."

19 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira said this and,
without further thought,
decided to go with Kṣattā-Vidura
to Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

20 First the lion-among-men Yudhiṣṭhira
ordered all his attendants to prepare
for the journey to Hastināpura.
His mind was made up.

21 After receiving the blessings
of the palace priests,
mahā-radiant rājā Yudhiṣṭhira went
to his purohita Dhaumya.

22 He distributed wealth to Brahmins
for the safe conduct
of the journey.
He also presented dresses.

23 A sixty-year old elephant
adorned with colourful trappings
was brought –
into its golden seat-enclosure Yudhiṣṭhira

24 Climbed. The elephant possessed all
the auspicious marks.
Yudhiṣṭhira wore his necklace,
crown, and other

25 Royal ornaments,
and shone with royal splendour.
Seeing him was like seeing Hutāśana-Agni
in fiery glory.

26 Cheered by the populace,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira left his capital.
The din accompanying his retinue
was tremendous

27 Professional chanters, sūtas,
and others sang the glory
of Yudhiṣṭhira
in words of rich praise.

28 A white umbrella shielded his head,
and under it
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira looked like the moon
in full splendour.

29 On all four sides golden yak-tails
fanned him gently.
People ran alongside shouting
"Victory to the king!" –
he acknowledged them,
bowing his head.

30 And others, with deer-like
and bird-like voices,
sang his praises
as the royal retinue passed.

31 The noise made by the foot-soldiers
who followed Yudhiṣṭhira's chariot,
was sky-rending
and deafening.

32 Seated on an elephant,
Bhīma led the way.
On both sides
were two gorgeously decorated horses,

33 On which rode Nakula and Sahadeva.
The twins shone
in their own glory,
and added lustre to the retinue.

34 Unexcelled-in-all-weapons Pārtha-Arjuna
drove the chariot given by Agni;
he carried the Gāṇḍīva bow
and trailed Yudhiṣṭhira.

35 The Kaurava rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
was in the centre of his soldiers.
Draupadī and the other ladies of the court,
in their finery,

36 Came in hundreds of palanquins,
ahead of Yudhiṣṭhira,
and guarded
by a heavy army contingent.

37 Horses, elephants, foot-soldiers –
a countless congregation!
Beflagged chariots also, loaded with arms,
adding to the din.

38 Vīṇā, conch, kettledrum, drum, and flute
joined to form a crescendo
of joyful clamour,
a glittering pageant.

39 Yudhiṣṭhira, the rājā of the Kurus,
crossed many lakes,
rivers and forests on his way
to Hastināpura.

Transcreated by P. Lal

40 He set up a massive camp
for his followers and army
on the outskirts
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's capital.

41 Here Vidura sadly told him
all about the hidden motives
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
for inviting him to the dice-game.

42 Yudhiṣṭhira entered Hastināpura
and went to meet Dhṛtarāṣṭra
in his palace.
He also met Bhīṣma,
Droṇa, Karṇa, Kṛpa,
and Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman.

43 Valiant Yudhiṣṭhira greeted and embraced them,
and they reciprocated.
He also met Somadatta, Duryodhana,
Śalya and Subala's son Śakuni,

44 And other invited rājās
who had preceded him.
He met heroic Duḥśāsana
and his other cousin-brothers,

45 As well as Jayadratha
and other Kauravas.
Surrounded by his brothers,
the mahā-muscled hero

46 Entered the palace of wise rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and saw the queen Devī Gāndhārī,
celebrated for her vowed obedience
to her husband,

47 In the company
of all her daughters-in-law,
like the star-surrounded asterism Rohiṇī.
He touched her feet, she blessed him.
Then he saw king Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
wisdom-inseeing monarch.

48 Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra smelt his head in affection,
and also the heads
of Yudhiṣṭhira's four brothers,
led by Bhīma.

49 O lord of the earth Janamejaya!
Seeing the handsome Pāṇḍavas,
those finest among men,
a thrill of joy went through the Kaurava hearts.

50 Advised by Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
the Pāṇḍavas went to rest
in their gem-and-gold-studded rooms.
Led by Duḥśalā, sister of Duryodhana,
the Kaurava ladies
visited them there.

51 Seeing Yājñasenī-Draupadī's radiant beauty
flaming like fire,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's daughters-in-law
were not very pleased.

52 The tigers-among-men Pāṇḍavas chatted pleasantly
and, after the ladies left,
they did their daily exercises,
and the religious rituals.

53 They smeared sandal-paste on their bodies
and asked Brahmins' blessings.
Dining lavishly,
they retired to sleep.

54 Girls sang the bull-brave Kaurava heroes
to sleep.
They passed the gracious night
in sexual enjoyment.
Next morning they woke to the sweet strains
of songs of praise.

55 Happy was their day,
happy their waking. They rose,
finished their ablutions, entered the sabhā,
and were welcomed in.

SECTION FIFTY-NINE

1 Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons (continued Vaiśampāyana),
led by Yudhiṣṭhira,
entered the sabhā
and offered pūjā-respect
to all who were pūjā-worthy;
they greeted the kings

2 In the correct precedence,
each according to his age,
and sat down on luxuriously-
cushioned seats.

3 After they were seated,
and after the kings too were seated,
the son of Subala, Śakuni,
said to Yudhiṣṭhira:

4 "Rājā, we were waiting for you.
Yudhiṣṭhira, begin the dice-game.
The carpet is unrolled.
Let the rules be decided."

5 Yudhiṣṭhira replied,
"Gambling is deceit. It's wrong.
Nothing Kṣatriya in it.
Quite the contrary –
it's a game of chance.
Why do you praise it, rājā?

6 Śakuni, those who know say crooked gambling
becomes an obsession.
Why are you bent
on tricking us into defeat?"

7 Śakuni repled:
"The shrewd player who can guess
the fall of the dice,
who can block the wily moves
of his opponents,
who's past master

8 Of the game – he's the one to play with.
The rest is luck.
Blame luck then.
Come, O lord of the earth, let us play.
What are you afraid of?"

9 "Asita's son Devala,"
replied Yudhiṣṭhira,
"finest of munis who have travelled
in all the worlds,
did not recommend
crooked gambling,

10 Which he said was wrong.
Victory in a war of dharma, he said,
was the Kṣatriyan way;
never victory in gambling.

11 Decent men do not use rude words,
decent men avoid trickery.
Decent men fight clean,
without guile and cunning.

12 Śakuni, don't use crooked means
to win the wealth with which
we benefit Brahmins.
Even enemies have to be fought honestly.

13 I don't want any underhand means
to bring me joy and wealth.
The point is:
Even if a gambler refrains from cheating,
he will find none
to praise him."

14 "Yudhiṣṭhira," said Śakuni,
"who's completely fair?
A clever man routs a less clever
in argument – is that fair?
Skilled person defeats another
less skilled – is that fair?

15 An expert gambler wants to defeat
a beginner – well?
Yudhiṣṭhira! Is it fair for a learned man
to defeat a less intelligent one?

16 Strong man routs weak.
Expert warrior humbles callow soldier.
Winning's the motive.
All life's like this, Yudhiṣṭhira.
Is it fair for a learned man
to defeat a less intelligent one?

17 If you think I shouldn't win,
if you think wanting to win is crooked,
don't play.
If you're afraid, don't play."

18 "Rājā," and Yudhiṣṭhira,
"remember this:
challenged, I play. I never refuse.
I have vowed this.
I am ruled by fate.
Fate is all-powerful.

19 Who'll play with me?
Is there anyone here
who can stake as much as I?
Let's begin."

20 "Lord of the world! I will stake gems and gold,"
Duryodhana said,
"and my uncle Śakuni will play
on my behalf."

21 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "If you ask me,
gambling by proxy
is against the rules.
You are intelligent enough
to know this.
If you still insist, let's begin."

SECTION SIXTY

1 Before the dice-game started
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
the rājās, led by Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
gathered in the sabhā.

2 Great Bharata-descendant Janamejaya!
Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa,
and mahā-intelligent Vidura
disconsolately took their seats.

3 The lion-necked, mahā-radiant kings
sat down singly or in pairs
in that richly-decorated.
glittering sabhā.

4 Like heaven refulgent with the glory
of the mahā-fortune-favoured gods,
the sabhā shone with the collective grandeur
of the kings.

5 Mahārāja Janamejaya!
All of them were learned in the Vedas,
all were mighty heroes, all handsome.
The dice-game began.

6 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "Rājā!
This precious, glittering
gold-and-pearl necklace,
produced in the whirlpool of the ocean,

7 I stake first. I will win!
Mahārāja, what do you stake?
What wealth
can you place here?"

8 "Much wealth, many jewels,"
said Duryodhana,
"which I can afford to lose.
Play! I will win."

9 Expert-in-dice Śakuni
picked up the dice, threw the dice.
and said to Yudhiṣṭhira,
"I win!"

SECTION SIXTY-ONE

1 Yudhiṣṭhira said,
"Śakuni, you win
with a dishonest throw.
And you are proud of it!
Come, let us play
with higher stakes!

2 I have many splendid pots
filled with *niṣka*-gold pieces,
one thousand in each.
All of them, all my treasury's
silver, gold, and other wealth, O rājā,
I now stake here."

3 Śakuni listened,
and said to the Kuru descendant,
the never-retreating eldest Pāṇḍava:
"I win!"

4 Yudhiṣṭhira said,
"My sacred, always-victorious
royal chariot,
the equal of a thousand chariots,

5 Symmetrically-shaped,
draped with tiger-skin, lovely-wheeled,
with its glorious flagstaff, and its small bells,
and its noise

6 Like storm-clouds of the ocean,
a chariot pulled by eight moon-white,
heavy-stamping horses – this, O rājā,
I now stake here."

7 Śakuni listened.
Using crooked means,
skilled Śakuni threw the dice
and exclaimed, "I win!"

8 "My hundred thousand serving slave-maids,
all young,
with golden bangles and armlets,
and gold-coin waistbands,

9 With expensive neck-ornaments,
dressed in the richest robes,
anointed with sandalpaste,
adept in the sixtyfour arts,

10 Specially in singing and dancing,
always eager to serve
the gods, *snātakas* and rājās –
I now stake them here."

11 Śakuni listened.
Using crooked means,
skilled Śakuni threw the dice
and exclaimed, "I win!"

12 Yudhiṣṭhira said,
"My thousands of slaves,
skilled in graceful service,
always dressed in silk,

13 Young, disciplined, intelligent,
wearing gold earrings,
waiting day and night on dinner-guests –
I now stake them here."

14 Śakuni listened.
Using crooked means,
skilled Śakuni threw the dice
and exclaimed, "I win!"

15 "Son of Subala," Yudhiṣṭhira said,
"one thousand musth elephants,
golden-girdled,
loaded with ornaments and garlands,
with lotus marks on their temples,
necks and other parts;

16 With white, plough-shaped tusks,
ideal for rājās to ride,
undisturbed by war noises,
with bodies like massive battering-rams,

17 With skin the colour of new clouds,
each with a following
of eight she-elephants –
I now stake them here, rājā."

18 Śakuni listened.
Using crooked means,
skilled Śakuni threw the dice
and exclaimed, "I win!"

19 Yudhiṣṭhira said,
"I have as many chariots
as elephants, with golden flagstaffs,
and horses and chariot-warriors,

20 Each paid a thousand gold coins a month
in war or peacetime.
All this wealth of mine
I now stake here, O rājā."

21 Śakuni listened.
Using crooked means,
skilled Śakuni threw the dice
and exclaimed, "I win!"

22 "*Tittiri*, *kalmāṣa*, and *gāndharva* horses,
all with golden garlands,
gifted to the wielder of-the-Gāṇḍīva-bow
Arjuna

23 By Citraratha, the great foe-crusher,
when Arjuna defeated him in battle –
all this wealth of mine
I now stake here, rājā."

24 Śakuni listened.
Using crooked means,
skilled Śakuni threw the dice
and exclaimed, "I win!"

25 Yudhiṣṭhira said,
"Ten thousand of the best carriages,
pulled by animals
of the finest breed;

26 Soldiers of each war-style,
selected in thousands,
all of them brave,
all unquestioned war-heroes,

27 Fine-rice eaters and milk-drinkers –
sixty thousand in all, broad-chested warriors.
All this wealth of mine
I now stake here, O rājā."

28 Śakuni listened.
Using crooked means,
skilled Śakuni threw the dice,
and exclaimed, "I win!"

29 "Four hundred *nidhi*-gems
set in copper and iron,
each worth five golden *droṇas*
of the most expensive

30 Goldleaf of the *jātarūpa* variety.
All this wealth of mine,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"I now stake here, O rājā."

31 Śakuni listened.
Using crooked means,
skilled Śakuni threw the dice,
and exclaimed, "I win!"

SECTION SIXTY-TWO

1 Even as they gambled,
going the way to ruin,
Vidura, dispeller of all doubts,
said to Dhṛtarāṣṭra:

2 "Mahārāja, O Bharata descendant,
listen to my words,
though they may seem
as unpleasant as medicine
to a dying man
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

3 When ill-minded Duryodhana was born,
he wailed like a jackal;
we knew then
he would ruin our race.

4 A jackal's been born to you.
You call him Duryodhana.
Your folly does not let you see this.
Listen to what Śukra said:

5 'The honey-snatcher, up in the tree,
does not realise he's about to fall.
Engrossed in greed,
he slips and dies.'

6 Duryodhana is engrossed in the honey
of the dice-game.
He's ruining himself by making
the mahā-chariot-hero Pāṇḍavas his enemies.

7 O mahā-learned one, you know well
that the Bhojas have a custom
of abandoning an unworthy son
for the general good.

8 The Andhakas, Yādavas and Bhojas
together abandoned Kaṁsa.
They asked Krishna, slayer of foes,
to kill Kaṁsa.

9 As a result they enjoyed happiness
for a hundred years.
Order ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna
to immobilise Suyodhana-Duryodhana.

10 Let this scoundrel's shame
be cause of Kaurava joy.
Exchange this crow for peacocks,
this jackal for tigers.
Don't drown yourself
in an ocean of sorrow.

11 'For the good of a family,
sacrifice one of the family;
for a village, sacrifice a family;
for a town, sacrifice a village;
for the ātman,
sacrifice the world.'

12 Those were the words of terrifier-of-foes,
seeing-into-hearts' Kāvya-Śukra,
when he persuaded the anti-gods
to sacrifice Jambha.

13 I have heard of a kingdom
whose birds used to spit out gold.
Its king surprised them
and slaughtered them;

14 Thereby in one stroke destroying
his present and future source of wealth –
simply because he was greedy.
King,
do not harass the Pāṇḍavas
because you want their wealth.

15 You will repent your folly bitterly,
later,
like the king who butchered the birds.
Be instead
like the garland-maker who cherishes
the flowering plants,

16 And continue to pluck flowers
from the Pāṇḍavas.
Refrain from scorching their roots
with fire fanned
by the wind of your anger.
Escape death with your sons, and ministers.

17 For who can withstand the collective might
of the sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī?
Even the chief god Indra, lord of the Maruts,
lord of all the gods, cannot withstand them."

SECTION SIXTY-THREE

1 Vidura continued:
"Gambling causes quarrels.
Gambling fosters disunity.
Gambling has terrible consequences.
By gambling, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana
invites his own ruin.

2 Pratīpa's and Śāntanu's descendants,
Bhīmasena's and Bāhlika's descendants
will all be destroyed
because of Duryodhana.

3 Blind Duryodhana, like a mad bull
breaking its own horns,
is ruining the prosperity
of his own kingdom.

4 A brave and intelligent man
who disregards his own intuitions
and prefers to follow
another's advice,
sinks, like a sailor in a boat
with a child-navigator.

5 Here's Duryodhana gambling with Yudhiṣṭhira –
and you ecstatic
that he is winning.
But can you not see
this will lead to war –
and that war to the doom of mankind?

6 Joy now – and horrors later.
Wrong advice has brought this on you.
How can you approve of the downfall
of a relative?

7 Descendant of Śāntanu,
descendant of Pratīpa,
listen in this assembly to words of wisdom.
Don't jump into a raging fire
by following the path
of this utter scoundrel.

8 When dice-maddened Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira
loses his temper, so will Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
Savyasācī-Arjuna and the twins.
Who will save you then?

9 Mahārāja! You are an exhaustless treasury.
You do not need gambling
to give you more wealth.
How will Pāṇḍava riches help you?
Get the greatest wealth of all –
their affection and support.

10 We all know how clever
Śakuni is at dice-play.
He knows many tricks, this mountain-king.
Send him back to where he came from.
Do not provoke a war
with the Pāṇḍavas."

SECTION SIXTY-FOUR

1 Duryodhana said, "Kṣattā-Vidura,
All I hear from you,
is how excellent our enemies are.
Ever thought of us, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons?
We are silly children to you.
O Vidura,
we know on whose side you are,
who you love!

2 The man who wants those dear to him
to succeed
and those not dear to him to fail –
well, his praise and blame
betray him,
don't they?

3 You sit in our laps like a snake.
Like a cat
you scorn those who feed you.
Wise men are agreed
on the great shame
of disloyal ingratitude.
Kṣattā-Vidura, how is it that you
don't fear even shame?

4 By defeating our enemies,
we gain great advantage.
Don't find fault with us, Kṣattā-Vidura,
until you give up
cultivating friendship
with those that hate us.

5 Unforgivable words can turn a friend
into an enemy.
When enemies are praised, care should be taken
not to let out one's secret preference.
Vidura, tell me:
why are you insistently indiscreet?

6 Don't think we don't know
what's in your mind, Vidura.
Go, learn wisdom from the elders.
The little reputation you have –
don't lose it.
Stop interfering with us.

7 Don't think we don't know.
You think, 'I am the lord',
so you have the right to scold us.
We never asked you for advice.
Stop irritating us, Kṣattā-Vidura:
and keep well – we have had enough.

8 The world has only one lord,
Vidura, not two.
That lord guides even the foetus,
that lord guides me.
Water flows downward,
I flow as that lord wishes.

9 If a man wants to smash a stone with his head
or feed a snake –
he must have his good reasons,
so leave him alone.
Try forcing advice on him,
and you'll gain an enemy.

10 Friendly advice is all right.
The man who burns camphor
won't even find any ashes left
if he delays extinguishing the fire.

11 Don't shelter an enemy's friend.
Don't shelter a jealous rival.
Go away, Vidura! Sweet words
don't make an unchaste wife faithful."

12 "Tell me, rājā," said Vidura,
"what do you think of men
who turn out their advisers?
Rājās are strange people –
first they patronise you,
then beat you with heavy clubs.

13 Prince! You think you are mature.
You think me silly.
Wicked-minded man!
Don't you know the silly man
is he who makes a friend
and then insults him?

14 Like a lustful wife
in a learned man's house,
an ill-motived man can never walk
the moral path.

15 In future, O rājā,
if you ever need to hear pleasant words
about what is good and bad,
go to women, fools,
the mentally retarded,
and others of the same kind.

16 There are scheming men in plenty
ready to say pleasant things
when you want them;
rare is the man
who will speak the harsh truth,
rare the man who will listen.

17 A rājā's real friend is he
who ignores considerations
of what will please or displease,
who abides by dharma,
and is ready to speak out
even the harshest truth.

18 Mahārāja,
drink what good men drink
and evil men don't.
It's a bitter, strong, burning,
hard-to-swallow medicine.
Drink it, and be sane.

19 I have always sought the welfare
of Vicitravīrya's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra and his sons.
Let the future be as it may –
I give you my namaste now, here.
And I ask the blessings
of all the twice-born present here.

20 O Kaurava descendant!
One last bit of careful advice:
Use your commonsense –
there is no point
in provoking a snake
whose eyes are spitting venom."

SECTION SIXTY-FIVE

1 "Yudhiṣṭhira," said Śakuni,
"you have lost a great deal
of Pāṇḍava wealth.
Kuntī's son, have you any left?"

2 Yudhiṣṭhira replied,
"Śakuni, my wealth
cannot be counted.
Why ask such a question?

3 Come, let's stake
tens of thousands, millons,
billions, hundreds of billions,
trillions, tens of trillions,

4 And hundreds of trillious,
quadrillions and hundreds of quadrillions.
That's my wealth.
I stake it now here."

5 Śakuni listened.
Using devious means,
skilled Śakuni threw the dice
and said, "I win!"

6 "I have countless cows, calves,
horses, goats and sheep, in the territory
covered by the Praṇāśa and Sindhu rivers.
All my wealth. I stake them."

7 Śakuni listened.
Using devious means,
skilled Śakuni threw the dice
and said, "I win!"

8 "My city, my land, all its houses
except those of Brahmins,
all its people
except the Brahmins –
this is still mine.
Rājā! This I now stake here."

9 Śakuni listened.
  Using devious means,
skilled Śakuni threw the dice
  and said, "I win!"

10 The ornaments of these princes here,
  their gold-coin belts,
their ear-rings – all my wealth –
  Rājā! I now stake it here."

11 Śakuni listened.
  Using devious means,
skilled Śakuni threw the dice
  and said, "I win!"

12 "Young, dark-skinned,
  mahā-muscled, lion-shouldered
and pink-eyed Nakula – my wealth –
  I now stake him."

13 Śakuni said,
  "Prince Nakula, so dear to you,
now belongs to us.
  Yudhiṣṭhira! What else have you?"

14 Saying this (Vaiśampāyana continued)
  Śakuni rolled the dice
and said to Yudhiṣṭhira:
  "I win!"

15 "Sahadeva, the expounder of dharma,
  renowned as a paṇḍit.
I know he should not be staked,
  he is so dear to me,
yet now, unlovingly,
  I stake Sahadeva!"

16 Śakunī listened. Using devious means,
skilled Śakunī threw the dice and said, "I win!"

17 "You're a fool," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
  "you follow adharma.
You're trying to create bad blood
  between us."

18 Śakuni said,
"A drunk falls in a ditch
and can't get out.
A worse drunk bangs his head
against a pillar.
Namaste, O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
O senior in age and learning!
Namaste, O bull-brave Bharata!

19 Yudhiṣṭhira, gamblers get all excited
and mumble rubbish
they would never otherwise,
not even in their dreams."

20 Yudhiṣṭhira said: "The always-victorious,
our boat across the sea of battle,
the energetic, incomparably popular hero –
Phālguna-Arjuna –
though I should not,
yet I dare to stake him here."

22 Śakuni listened. Using devious means,
skilled Śakuni threw the dice and said, "I win!"

23 "Ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna,
the expert archer, is now ours," said Śakuni.
"O rājā, the only wealth now left with you
is Bhīma."

24 "Our leader, brave like thunderbolt-wielding Indra
in battle, the enemy of the Dānava-antigods,
with leonine shoulders,
curving eyebrows,

25 Large eyes, matchless in strength,
mace-wielding foe-crusher,
unable to tolerate
the least insult –
though I should not, yet I dare now
to stake Prince Bhīma."

26 Śakuni listened.
Using devious means,
skilled Śakuni threw the dice
and said, "I win!"

27 "Son of Kuntī," Śakuni said,
"your wealth, horses,
cattle, your brothers – are all lost.
What else have you?"

28 "I am left,
the eldest and loved-by-all brother.
If you win me,
I will do what one who is won does."

29 Śakuni listened.
Using devious means,
skilled Śakuni threw the dice
and said, "I win!"

30 Śakuni said,
"King, you have lost yourself!
How wrong of you,
when you still had wealth left!"

31 Śakuni turned to the assembled rājās
and recounted
his winning of the heroic Pāṇḍavas
one after the other.

32 "But there is still one precious
bit of wealth left, O rājā,
Kṛṣṇā-Pāñcālī-Draupadī.
Stake her, and win yourself back."

33 "I now stake her," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"who is neither short nor tall,
neither dark nor pale,
who has wavy dark-blue hair,

34 Eyes like autumn lotus-leaves,
fragrant like the autumn lotus,
lovely like autumn itself,
perfect as Lakṣmī herself
in grace and beauty,
The ideal woman that a man
wants as a wife –
never-offending anyone,
graceful and patient and gentle,

35 Gifted with all the guṇas,
soft-spoken and sweet-speaking,
the ideal wife for the pursuit
of dharma, artha and kāma.

36 She is the last to sleep,
the first to wake,
even earlier than the early-rising
cowherds and shepherds.
She knows what is to be done,
and what is not to be done.

37 Her sweat-bathed face is lovely
like the lotus, like the jasmine;
she is slim-waisted
like the middle of the sacred *vedi*,
long-haired, pink-lipped,
with not excessive body-hair,

38 Lovely-waisted Draupadī, princess of Pāñcāla,
I now make her my stake,
O son of Subala.
Come, let's play, rājā!"

39 Hardly had intelligent Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
said this than all the elders
present in the sabha
murmured, "*Dhik! Dhik!* Shame! Shame!"

40 The sabhā was agitated;
many rājās expressed sorrow and displeasure.
Sweat gleamed
on Bhīṣma, Droṇa and Kṛpa.

41 Vidura clasped his head between his hands,
like a man in a delirium.
He stared at the floor,
brooding, sighing like a snake.

42 Bāhlīka, Pratīpa's grandson
Somadatta, Sañjaya,
Aśvatthāman, Bhūriśravas,
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Yuyutsu
wrung their hands and kept sighing
deep snake-sighs.

43 Dhṛtarāṣṭra, secretly happy,
could not hide his feelings,
and kept asking,
"Have they won? Have they won?"

44 Duḥśāsana and Karṇa laughed uproariously;
and others too;
but there were tears in the eyes
of many others in the sabhā.

45 Subala's son Śakuni, flushed with success,
repeated, "I win! I win!"
He reached forward
and picked up the dice.

SECTION SIXTY-SIX

1 Duryodhana said:
"Kṣattā-Vidura, come here.
Bring Draupadī here,
respected and beloved wife of the Pāṇḍavas.
Put her in the maids' quarters,
and make her sweep the rooms."

2 "You fool," said Vidura,
"don't you know you are using words
that will hang you?
Don't you see you're standing
on the edge of doom? –
A deer inviting the wrath of tigers!

3 You utter wretch, can't you see
the venomous snakes curling
round your head?
Stop now – don't tempt Yama any more.

4 If you ask me, Draupadī is not enslaved,
not lost – she was staked
after Yudhiṣṭhira lost himself.
He was not his own master.

5 The bamboo tree flowers
when about to wither;
so this rājā son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
wins this last treasure.
Drunk with gambling he cannot see
the mahā-terrors that lie ahead.

6 No man should speak harshly
or hurt others; no man
should overcome enemies by gambling
and other wicked means;
no man should speak words
that lead others to hell.

7 One man speaks words;
and another smarts day and night –
they have stung him
to his very heart.
Therefore, paṇḍits declare that bitter words
should remain unspoken.

8 Remember the goat who swallowed a hook?
The hunter pushed its head on the ground,
and ripped it apart by pulling out the hook.
Don't be the goat to the Pāṇḍavas' hook.

9 Pṛthā-Kunti's sons never use harsh words.
Only low-class pariahs
speak the way you do
about the forest-dwellers,
householders, ascetics,
and the consummately learned.

10 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son has no idea
that he is entering
one of the terrifying gates of hell.
Accompanying him
are Duḥśāsana and other Kauravas
addicted to gambling.

11 Watermelons will sink, stones float,
boats go under,
but Dhṛtarāṣṭra's foolish royal son
will not listen to me.

12 He will destroy the Kauravas.
When the wisdom of friends
is not heeded,
when obsession is the norm,
a horrendous total doom
is sure for the Kauravas."

SECTION SIXTY-SEVEN

1 Drunk with pride, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son said,
"Shame on Kṣattā-Vidura!"
He looked at the doorkeeper
and ordered him
in front of the assembled kings
in the sabhā:

2 "Doorkeeper, go. Bring Draupadī here.
Don't be afraid of the Pāṇḍavas.
Ksattā-Vidura's is a blabbering coward –
he hates us."

3 The doorkeeper, a man of the Sūta caste,
hurried away at the rājā's order.
He entered like a dog slinking into a lion's den,
and said to the Pāṇḍava queen:

4 "O Draupadī, you have been lost
byYudhiṣṭhira to Duryodhana in a dice-game.
Come with me to Dhṛtarāṣṭra's palace,
Yājñasenī-Draupadī,
and I will find work for you
in the servants' quarters."

5 "Who are you, doorkeeper," said Draupadī,
"to speak to me like this?
Which prince is there
who stakes his own wife?
Was the rājā out of his senses?
Was there nothing else to stake?"

6 "Nothing," replied the doorkeeper,
"so the-one-without-a-foe Yudhiṣṭhira
staked you. First his brothers, then himself,
then, princess, you."

7 "Go back to the sabhā, Sūta's son,"
said Draupadī,
"and ask that gambler who he lost first –
himself or me.

8 Then, son of a Sūta,
come here and take me with you.
I must know what the rājā says
before I go helpless with you."

9 The doorkeeper hurried back to the sabhā
and repeated Draupadī's words
to Yudhiṣṭhira
sitting in the centre of the Indra-like rājās:

10 "Draupadī asks you:
'Were you your master before you lost me?
Did you lose yourself first,
or me first?' "

11 Yudhiṣṭhira did not say a word,
neither agreeing nor denying.
He sat like a man
deprived of his senses.

12 Duryodhana said,
"Tell the Pāñcāla girl to come here herself
and ask him, so that all here
can enjoy the exchange."

13 Obedient to his rājā-lord,
the distressed doorkeeper
hurried to Draupadī
and said:

14 "Princess, they summon you to the sabhā.
Oh the Kauravas are doomed!
He's fallen so low
that he wants you there in person.
He is finished.
He cannot prosper."

15 Draupadī said:
"It is ordained.
Young and old pass through joy and sorrow.
Dharma is the supreme goal.
Dharma, if practised,
brings the highest blessings.

16 O Dharma, stay with the Kauravas!
Go to the sabhā –
tell the noble assembly there
these words of dharma –
Draupadī will do what her illustrious
dharmātmā elders recommend as right."

17 The Sūta returned to the sabhā
and repeated Yājñasenī-Draupadī's words.
They stared at the floor,
because they knew
the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra was firm-minded
in this matter.

18 O bull-brave Bharata Janamejaya!
Yudhiṣṭhira, guessing Duryodhana's intention,
sent a messenger
known to Draupadī

19 With this message: "Pāñcālī-Draupadī,
though you are in your period,
and therefore dressed in a single cloth
knotted below the navel,
come to the sabhā as you are,
and stand weeping before your father-in-law.

20 Seeing you come there, a princess,
in that condition,
all who are present in the sabhā
will silently condemn Duryodhana."

21 The intelligent messenger rushed
to Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī's mansion,
and gave her the message exactly
as desired by Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira.

22 The mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas,
puzzled and distressed,
but bound by their word,
could not decide on a firm course of action.

23 Duryodhana looked at their faces and smiled;
he said to the Sūta,
"*Prātikāmin*, Doorkeeper, bring her here.
Let the Kauravas answer her publicly."

24 Obedient to his master, but also afraid
of Drupada's daughter Draupadī,
the doorkeeper swallowed his pride and said,
"What shall I tell her?"

25 Duryodhana said, "Duḥśāsana,
this idiot Sūta is afraid
of wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma.
Go, drag Yājñasenī-Draupadī here yourself.
Our enemies are now our slaves.
What can they do?"

26 Prince Duḥśāsana heard his brother's command
and rose with bloodshot eyes.
He went to Princess Draupadī
and said:

27 "Pāñcālī, dark-skinned beauty,
Kṛṣṇā, come, you are ours.
Forget your modesty and look at Duryodhana.
Lotus-eyed lady, we are your lords.
We have won you by dharma.
Come to our sabhā."

28 She stood up fearfully,
and sadly hid her face in her hands;
the helpless lady ran to the palace
of the elderly Kaurava ladies
of the bull-brave Kaurava
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

29 Duḥśāsana, roaring, ran after her;
he caught the wife
of Indra-among-men Yudhiṣṭhira
by her long, flowing, blue, wavy hair.

30 The hair that was sprinkled
with mantra-sanctified water
at the Rājasūya mahā-yajña
was now in the clutch
of the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
who defied the Pāṇḍavas.

31 Dragging husbanded-yet-husbandless
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī by her long hair,
Duḥśāsana brought her
into the sabhā;
she trembled like a plantain-tree
in a fierce storm.

32 Her body was bent; she said softly,
"I am in my period.
I am wearing only one cloth.
Shameless one,
don't drag me to the sabhā
in this condition."

33 Yājñasenī-Draupadī prayed to Krishna
and to Jiṣṇu-Arjuna, the earthly Hari and Nara,
as Duḥśāsana dragged her
by her blue-black hair.

34 Duḥśāsana said, "Yājñasenī-Draupadī!
In period or not, one cloth or no cloth,
you are our slave.
We have won you
in the dice-game –
so enjoy your slavery!"

35 Her hair awry,
her cloth slipping as he dragged her,
burning-with-shame-Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
suppressed her anger, and said softly:

36 "All the men here know the śāstras,
they know the scriptures,
the rituals.
They are all like Indra!
They are my gurus –
how can I face them like this?

37 O cruel one, don't! Shameless one, don't!
Don't undress me!
The Pāṇḍavas will never forgive you,
not even if the gods
and Indra himself come forward
to help you.

38 Dharma's mahātmā son is bound by dharma.
And dharma is subtle.
Only the clear-visioned
see its real nature.
I will never admit any fault in my husband.
I listen only to his virtues.

39 It is most wrong, most wrong
to drag me in my period
before the Kaurava heroes.
But none here finds it wrong.

40 *Dhik*! Shame on you!
If all these great Kaurava heroes
find nothing wrong here,
then the dharma of the Bharatas is dead,
the dharma of the Kṣatriyas
is dead.

41 Droṇa, Bhīṣma, mahātmā Vidura,
and the great rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
have lost their greatness – else why
are they silent on this great adharma?

42 Tell me, members of this sabhā, answer me:
What do you think –
have I been won or not won –
tell me, O lords of the earth?"

43 Graceful-waisted Draupadī
cried in her sorrow and glanced angrily
at her husbands.
Her glance inflamed their rising anger.

44 What hurt them more than the loss
of their kingdom,
wealth, and ornaments was that glance
of ashamed Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.

45 Seeing Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī looking at her husbands,
and almost fainting,
Duḥśāsana pulled her hair harder and laughed,
shouting, "Slave! Slave!"

46 Karṇa was delighted and laughed out loud,
and acclaimed it.
The Gāndhāra-rājā Śakuni, Subala's son,
approved by applauding Duḥśāsana.

47 With the exception of these three
and Duryodhana,
all present were filled with sorrow
seeing Draupadī dragged.

48 Bhīṣma said: "Fortune-favoured lady!
I know a man with no wealth
cannot stake another's wealth.
I also know a wife
is at her husband's command.
What can I say?
It is all very puzzling.
Dharma is very subtle.

49 Yudhiṣṭhira will give up the entire world
rather than deviate from dharma.
Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira
clearly said,
'I have been won.' Very confusing.
I don't know what to say.

50 Śakuni's dice-skill is well-known.
Yudhiṣṭhira voluntarily
agreed to play.
He does not say Śakuni cheated.
Very confusing.
I don't know what to say."

51 Draupadī said,
"The rājā was summoned to the sabhā;
though a novice,
he was made to play
against sharp, desperate, seasoned gamblers.
What's voluntary in that?

52 They conspired against him
and manipulated
to deprive the finest of the Kauravas
and Pāṇḍavas of his good sense.
He lost himself first –
then he staked me.

53 In this sabha are great Kauravas,
who are lords of their sons
and daughters-in-law.
Consider, therefore, what I have said,
and give a proper answer
to my question.

54 You cannot have a sabhā without elders,
You cannot have elders without dharma,
You cannot have dharma without truth,
You cannot have truth with trickery."

55 Duḥśāsana shouted insults
at weeping Draupadī
as she stood there, looking sideways
at her husbands.

56 Bhīma saw Draupadī dragged in her period,
her dress coming loose,
and he could not bear it –
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
looked at Yudhiṣṭhira
and spoke out his anger.

SECTION SIXTY-EIGHT

1 Bhīma said: "Yudhiṣṭhira,
many gamblers keep loose women in their houses.
But they don't stake them.
In fact, they care for them.

2 The wealth, the ornaments
the king of Kāśi gave us;
the jewels, gems, animals,
expensive weapons

3 Which other kings presented us –
our kingdom, yourself, us –
all these have been lost
in the dice-game.

4 I did not mind. I checked my anger.
But to stake Draupadī –
this I consider
as grossly wrong.

5 We are her husbands – does our trusting wife
deserve this from us?
You are responsible for the way
these vicious men insult her.

6 Rājā! Because of her,
I am filled with disgust for you.
I'll burn your hands!
Sahadeva, bring me some fire!"

7 "Bhīma," said Arjuna,
"what's wrong with you?
You've never spoken like this before.
What's happened
to your sense of dharma?
Have your foes destroyed it?

8 Don't fall into their trap.
Follow the highest dharma.
Should anyone ever go against
a dharma-following elder brother?

9 The Kauravas summoned rājā Yudhiṣṭhira;
according to the Kṣatriya vow,
he gambled, though unwillingly.
This looks like mahā-glory to me."

10 "Dhanañjaya-Arjuna," said Bhīma,
"I know he followed the Kṣatriya custom.
Or I would have burnt his hands to ashes
long ago."

11 Seeing the confusion of the Pāṇḍavas
and Draupadi dragged
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Vikarṇa, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son, said:

12 "Lords of the earth,
answer Yājñasenī-Draupadī's question.
If we refuse to give our verdict,
we will go the way to hell.

13 The two eldest Kauravas –
Bhīṣma and Dhṛtarāṣṭra – are silent.
Mahā-intelligent Vidura also
has nothing to say.

14 Bharadvāja's son Droṇa, and Kṛpa –
both our ācāryas –
why are these illustrious Brahmins
also silent?

15 Then let all the assembled lords of the earth,
giving up prejudice and anger,
decide here
what their verdict is to be.

16 Lords of the earth,
consider her question carefully,
and let each then take sides
for or against."

17 In this way Vikarṇa kept appealing
to the assembled earth-lords
to answer
Draupadī's question
None of the kings present spoke
one way or the other.

18 Vikarṇa sighed deeply;
he rubbed
his palms together;
he appealed to them again.

19 "I do not care, O Kauravas and earth-lords,
whether you speak or not,
but for myself I will say
what I think is right.

20 It is said, O finest of men,
that kings have four major vices –
hunting, drinking,
gambling, and womanising.

21 If a man has these vices,
he cannot invoke dharma.
His deeds lose the sanction
of popular approval.

22 Pāṇḍu's son here was lost
in one of these vices
when, pushed by those tricksters,
he gambled away Draupadī.

23 Spotless Draupadī is the common wife
of the sons of Pāṇḍu.
He lost himself first,
then he staked her.

24 Subala's son Śakuni urged him on
to stake Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.
Taking all these facts together,
I find her not lost."

25 A mahā-uproar rose
in the sabhā.
Many kings vociferously praised Vikarṇa,
and blamed Subala's son Śakuni.

26 Rādhā's son Karṇa
could not control his anger.
He waved his handsome arms,
and shouted:

27 "Vikarṇa! This world has all kinds
of trouble-makers.
Wood feeds fire, and fire devours wood;
so a son sometimes destroys his family.

28 Disease grows in the body,
and disease eats up the body.
Cattle graze on grass,
and cattle trample grass.

29 And you, you were fed on Kaurava glory,
and now you are out to destroy it!
Droṇa, Bhīṣma,
Kṛpa, Aśvatthāman,
mahā-intelligent Vidura, Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and Gāndhārī – all wise elders –

30 All of them here,
in spite of Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī's pleas,
are silent. They feel Draupadī's daughter
has been won by dhārmika means.

31 Son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
callow in years, and loud in words!
You're a boy, yet you come here
and preach like an old man!

32 What do you know of dharma,
younger brother of Duryodhana?
You foolishly keep saying
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī has not been won.

33 How do you come to this conclusion, son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
when you know very well
that the eldest Pāṇḍava staked all he had
in the game?

34 O bull-brave Bharata!
Isn't Draupadī a part of his possessions?
What's wrong with you? – she's won; dharma says so;
how do you say she is not won?

35 Wasn't her name brought up in the game,
and didn't the Pāṇḍavas agree
to Yudhiṣthira staking her?
And you say she isn't won?

36 If you say it is adharma
to have her brought into the sabhā
draped in a single cloth,
then listen to me –

37 O Kaurava descendant!
The gods have ordained one husband only
for a woman; she has many;
that's proof enough she's a harlot.

38 It seems perfectly in order,
in my opinion, to drag her
in this sabhā draped in a single cloth,
or even naked.

39 Whatever wealth belonged to the Pāṇḍavas –
this includes themselves and her –
has been won by dhārmika means
by Subala's son Śakuni.

40 Duḥśāsana, ignore
this high-sounding preacher boy Vikarṇa.
Strip the Pāṇḍavas naked –
and strip her naked."

41 O Bharata Janamejaya (Vaiśampāyana continued),
when the Pāṇḍavas heard this,
they took off their upper garments,
and were silent.

42 Then, O rājā,
Duḥśāsana, in front of everyone's eyes,
began pulling at the single dress
that Draupadī wore.

43 As he started pulling,
Draupadī thought of Hari-Krishna.
She thought: *A long time ago mahātmā Vasiṣṭha
said that in times of mahā-distress*

44 *One should think of Bhagavan Hari-Krishna.*
She murmured again and again,
"Govinda, Krishna"; she kept thinking
of the Lord God Narayana,
the Supreme Grandfather of the Universe,
the Fear-Dispeller in times of calamity.

45 "O Govinda!
Dweller of Dvārakā!
Beloved of the gopis,
Krishna!
Keśava,
Can't you see the Kauravas –
How they insult me!

46 Hé Lord! Nātha!
Lord of Vraja!
Hé Lord of Ramā-Lakṣmī!
Janārdana,
Destroyer of sorrows! Punisher of people!
I am drowning in the Kaurava ocean,
O save me!

47 Krishna, Krishna,
Mahāyogī!
Creator of the worlds!
Ātman of the worlds!
Govinda!
I am losing my senses in the clutches of the Kauravas!
O save me!"

48 She covered her face,
and sobbed loudly;
she kept thinking of Hari-Krishna,
lord of the three worlds.

49 Krishna heard Yājñasenī-Draupadī.
Deeply stirred, he rose.
Moved by compassion,
he hurried to her on foot.

50 Yājñasenī-Draupadī prayed for help
to Krishna,
Visnu, Hari, Nara;
and mahātmā-Krishna came as Dharma,
unseen, and covered her,
with a variety of lovely dresses.

51 As the single dress was pulled off,
O lord of the earth,
others of the same kind appeared
and covered her.

52 *Prabhu*! Lord! Because Dharma protected her,
it seemed hundreds and hundreds
of many-coloured cloths
appeared to cover her.

53 All started shouting. The kings,
seeing this marvellous awesome spectacle,
began praising Draupadī,
and condemning Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.

54 Bhīma squeezed his palms hard;
his lips trembled in anger.
He stood up, among the rājās,
and loudly took this fierce vow:

55 "Kṣatriyas of the world! Listen!
Listen to my words –
words never before uttered,
words never again to be uttered!

56 May I never face my revered ancestors,
O lords of the earth,
if I fail to do
what I now vow –

57 I will rip open the breast
of this vicious beast of the Bharatas
and drink his blood
on the battlefield."

58 Hearing these gruesome, horripilating words,
all present applauded Bhīma
and found fault
with Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duḥśāsana.

59 A heap of cloths lay
in the centre of the sabhā.
Duḥśāsana, tired and ashamed,
sat down.

60 The kings in the sabhā stared at Kuntī's sons,
and burst into stirring cries
of disapproval,
"*Dhik!* Shame! Shame!"

61 Wondering why
the Kauravas refused
to answer Draupadī's question,
they murmured against Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

62 All-dharma-knowing Vidura
lifted his hands in the sabhā
and appealed for silence;
he said:

63 "All present in this sabhā!
Weeping husband-less Draupadī
asks a question that none cares to answer.
You insult dharma!

64 In this sabhā a suffering person comes,
aflame with doubt.
Good men should put out the fire
with soothing words of truth and dharma.

65 A suffering person asks this sabhā
about the rules of dharma.
Answer the question
coolly and impartially.

66 Vikarṇa has answered the question
as wisely as he could.
You should also, O kings,
answer as best as you can.

67 The man who knows dharma
and sits silent in a sabhā when questioned,
brings on himself
the taint of a half-lie.

68 The man who knows dharma
and answers falsely in a sabhā
when questioned, brings on himself
the taint of a lie. No doubt of this.

69 Wise men in this connection
give the ancient story
of Prahlāda and Aṅgiras's son
to establish their point.

70 A lord of the Daityas called Prahlāda
had a son Virocana,
who fell out with Sudhanva,
the son of Aṅgiras,
over who would marry
a certain girl.

71 Each staked his life:
'I am superior!', 'No, I!',
desperately wanting
to marry the girl.

72 The quarrel spiralled,
they both went to Prahlāda,
'Who is superior? –
Tell us the truth.'

73 Prahlāda, disturbed, looked
at Sudhanva.
Sudhanva, burning with the anger
of Brahmā's punishing mace, said:

74 'If, O Prahlāda, you answer falsely
or refuse to answer,
Indra's thunderbolt will splinter your head
into a hundred pieces.'

75 Prahlāda trembled
like a banyan-leaf,
and went to the mahā-radiant Kaśyapa
for advice.

76 'O mahā-fortune-favoured one,' said Prahlāda,
'you know all about the dharma
of gods, anti-gods, and Brahmins.
My problem of dharma is this –

77 Tell me, what happens to a man who,
when asked a question,
refuses to answer,
or answers falsely.'

78 'The man who knows,' said Kaśyapa,
'but out of fear, anger, or passion
will not answer,
suffers one thousand Varuṇa-nooses.

79 The witness who flaps his cow-ears
and won't answer
in order to please both parties,
suffers a thousand Varuṇa-nooses.

80 After a full year, one noose is loosened.
Therefore,
a man who knows should speak the truth
when asked.

81 If dharma mixed with adharma
appears before a sabhā,
let the sabhā members separate
adharma from dharma.
If they fail to do this,
they are accountable and punishable.
If they do not pull out the thorn,
the thorn pierces the sabhā members.

82 If a sabhā refuses to condemn
a condemnable act,
half that act's taint
falls on the sabhā's head,
a quarter on the guilty person,
a quarter on all present.

83 If, however, a sabhā condemns
what is condemnable,
the sabhā's head is freed of his misdeeds,
and no taint
touches those present.
All blame falls on the guilty person.

84 Those who, questioned about dharma,
answer falsely,
wipe out all past and future merit
earned by seven generations of ancestors.

85 The grief of a man who has lost his wealth,
a man who has lost his son,
a man in debt,
a man bereft of success,

86 A woman who has lost her husband,
a man suffering the king's displeasure,
a childless woman,
a man attacked by a tiger,

87 A wife whose husband takes a second wife,
a man deprived of wealth
by false testimony –
these griefs the gods say are the same.

88 A man who does not speak the truth
suffers all these griefs.
Anyone seeing, hearing or knowing
is a witness.

89 A witness must speak the truth.
A witness who speaks the truth
never loses dharma,
never loses artha.'

90 Having listened to Kaśyapa,
Prahlāda said to his son,
'Sudhanva is superior to you,
as Aṅgiras is to me.

91 Sudhanva's mother is superior
to your mother.
Therefore, Virocana,
Sudhanva is the lord of your life.'

92 Sudhanva said,
'Affection for your son did not affect
your sense of dharma.
Your son therefore will live a hundred years.'

93 There are the basic truths of dharma.
Let this sabhā now decide
how Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī's question
is to be answered."

94 The kings heard Vidura (continued Vaiśampāyana)
but were silent.
Karṇa said to Duḥśāsana,
"Take Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī to the slave-girls' quarters."

95 Duḥśāsana began dragging away trembling,
shame-filled tapasyā-observing Draupadī.
Sobbing Draupadī
kept calling out to the Pāṇḍavas.

SECTION SIXTY-NINE

1 Draupadī said:
"One duty remains,
which I must now do.
Dragged by this mighty hero,
I nearly forgot, forgive me,
I was so confused.

2 I bow to all of you,
all my elders and gurus.
Forgive me
for not doing so earlier.
It was not all my fault,
O gentlemen of the Kaurava-sabhā."

3 Unused to such harshness
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
the tapasyā-observing, patient, suffering lady fell,
sobbing, on the floor.

4 "Once before," said Draupadī,
"in my svayamvara,
I faced all you kings. Before that,
I was never seen by strangers.
Today I face you again, in this sabhā,
dragged here by force.

5 Whom the wind never saw,
whom the sun never saw
inside her own house – she stands exposed,
before you today, in this sabhā.

6 Never before have we heard
of a dharma-devoted woman forced to stand
before a sabhā. The Kauravas have broken this rule
of sanātana dharma.

7 The Pāṇḍavas would not so much
as let the wind touch me.
Today they let ill ātmaned men
molest me.

8 Something must be very wrong with the times
if the Kauravas defile
their innocent daughter and daughter-in-law
in this way!

9 What greater shame can there be for me,
nobly-born, sati-innocent,
to be dragged here like this?
Where is your sense of dharma?

10 The wife of the Pāṇḍavas,
the sister of Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
the loved-and-loving *sakhī* of Vāsudeva-Krishna –
dragged here like this! How is this possible?

11 Listen, Kauravas! I am the wife
of Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira, royally-born
like him. Do I look like a slave-girl?
But I'll follow your advice.

12 Look at this scoundrel, O Kauravas,
who insults me,
this destroyer of Kaurava glory.
I can stand it no more!

13 O kings, O Kauravas,
tell me only this –
have I been rightly won or not?
I will do what you say."

14 Bhīṣma said, "Fortune-favoured lady,
I have already said
that Dharma is subtle. Even the mahātmās
cannot always be sure.

15 What a strong man says
often becomes the only dharma;
a weak man may have dharma on his side,
but who listens to him?

16 The point at issue today is very complex,
very grave, very subtle.
To tell you the truth,
I do not know what to say.

17 One thing is certain – if the Kauravas
give themselves up to greed and folly,
the doom of our race
is certain.

18 Fortune-favoured lady,
the family that has taken you
as its daughter-in-law
has men and women who,
in a crisis, will not stray
from the path of dharma.

19 Your conduct now, O Pāñcālī-Draupadi,
is worthy of you –
for though you suffer,
you appeal to the truths of dharma.

20 Our elders, learned-in-dharma,
Droṇa and others,
sit here with lowered eyes like dead men
with life-breaths gone.

21 In my view, the final authority
in this matter
is Yudhiṣṭhira himself.
He can say if you are won or not."

SECTION SEVENTY

1 All the kings there
(Vaiśampāyana continued)
saw Devī-Draupadī trembling
like a she-osprey, crying,
but, fearing Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son,
they kept silent.

2 Duryodhana saw all
the sons and grandsons
of mighty monarchs
silent. He smiled,
and said to the daughter
of the Pāñcāla rājā:

3 "Yajña-born Draupadī,
put your question
to powerful Bhīma,
to Arjuna, Nakula,
and Sahadeva –
let them answer.

4 Pāñcāli-Draupadī, let them publicly,
in front of you, state
that Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira
is not their lord,
that he is a liar –
and I will set you free.

5 Let Dharma's son,
who is like Indra himself,
who cherishes dharma, –
let mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira say
if he is your lord or not.
Then choose us or them.

6 All the Kauravas here
are lost in the depths
of your sorrow,
they stare at your husbands
with pity and cannot
make up their minds."

7 When Duryodhana finished,
all started shouting in the sabhā.
Some glanced at each other
with approving looks.
Others sat still
and groaned, "Hai! Hai!"

8 The Kauravas were delighted
with the response.
Many earth-lords offered pūjā-praise
to the dharma-following,
excellent Kaurava Duryodhana.

9 Turning sideways, they looked
at wise-in-dharma Yudhiṣṭhira
curious to know
what his reply would be.

10 They looked at dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna,
at Bhīma, and the twins,
curious as to how these Pāṇḍavas
would reply.

11 When the shouting subsided, Bhīma,
raising his handsome
sandal-paste-smeared arms,
said:

12 "If mahā-minded Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
were not our guru-elder,
we would never have tolerated
this savage insult.

13 He is the lord
of our religious and ascetic merits,
lord of our lives.
If he thinks he is lost, we too are lost.

14 So must it be! Or how could any creature
who walks the earth
escape from me
after touching a hair of Pāñcālī-Draupadī?

15 Look at my arms!
They are like two iron maces!
Caught in their embrace, even Śatakratu-Indra
of a hundred sacrifices cannot escape.

16 I am bound by dharma.
I am bound by the respect
due to an elder brother.
Arjuna keeps telling me to be quiet.
That is why
I am trapped like this.

17 One word from Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
and I will not need
even a sword –
I'll pummel these wicked sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, like a lion
slapping deer to death."

18 Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and Vidura
said to Bhīma:
"Don't! Don't be rash!
Bear with them. You can do it."

SECTION SEVENTY-ONE

1 Karṇa said, "In this sabhā,
Bhīṣma, Vidura and Droṇa
speak with great originality –
they call their master wicked,
they run him down,
they wish him ill.

2 Slave, son, and wife –
these three are always
dependent. Their wealth
belongs to their lord.
Dear Draupadī, you are a slave's
wealth, you are nothing.

3 Go to the inner apartments
and wait on the rājā
and his relatives – that's your work.
Princess! Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons,
not Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons,
are now your lords.

4 Lovely one, get yourself
another husband now,
a non-gambling one.
Everyone knows a slave-girl
is free to go about
finding a new husband.

5 Yajña-born Yājñaseni-Draupadī!
Nakula, Bhīma, Yudhiṣṭhira,
Sahadeva and Arjuna,
now belong to us. Like you.
Your husbands are now our slaves,
not your masters.

6 Yudhiṣṭhira must have cared
precious little for life,
precious little for honour
and manhood to offer as stake
the daughter of Drupada
in this sabhā's dice-game!"

7 Bhīma heard this (continued
Vaiśampāyana) and breathed hard.
He looked dejected.
Dharma held his hands.
But his eyes burned all
they looked at, and he said:

8 "I am a slave now,
so I cannot even be angry
with Karna, the son of a charioteer.
Such is the dharma of a slave!
O Yudhiṣṭhira, Indra-among-rājās, if you had
not staked our queen, would I
have had to hear these words?"

9 Rājā Duryodhana, hearing what Rādhā's son
Karṇa said, turned to Yudhiṣṭhira,
who sat unmoving and silent
like a paralysed figure.

10 "King," he said, "Bhīma, Arjuna
and the twins accept your lordship.
Answer this:
Is Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī ours or no?"

11 Saying this to Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
power-intoxicated Duryodhana smiled
and bared his left thigh –
which was shapely like the trunk

12 Of a plantain tree,
like the trunk of an elephant,
hard like a thunderbolt,
graced with all the auspicious marks –

13 And, with the intention of encouraging
Rādhā's son Karṇa and insulting Bhīma,
he showed it to Draupadī
in everyone's presence.

14 Bhīma's eyes widened with red anger;
he turned
and said to Duryodhana,
in the middle of all the rājās:

15 “Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma will not go
to the heaven of his ancestors
until he breaks that thigh
in a battle!”

16 Like sparks spluttering from the cracks
in a burning tree,
anger scattered from every fibre
of Bhīma’s body.

17 Vidura said, “Sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
great danger lies ahead.
Heed Bhīṣma’s threat.
A gruesome calamity
will overcome the Bharata race
if no one listens now.

18 Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s sons
have gambled today
with utter recklessness.
Now they insult a woman.
Nobility is dead.
The Kauravas conspire viciously.

19 Listen to the dharma
that I now give you!
Violated in an assembly,
Dharma destroys the assembly.
Yudhiṣṭhira staked her
after losing himself first.

20 If a man stakes something
when he was nothing –
what is won from him
is dream-wealth. O Kauravas,
ignore the Gāndhāra-rājā Śakuni,
do not abandon dharma.”

21 Duryodhana replied:
“I will abide by the words
of Bhīma, Arjuna,
and the twins. Let them declare
Yudhiṣṭhira is not their lord,
and Yājñasenī-Draupadī goes free.”

22 Arjuna said, "Mahātmā-Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
was our lord before
the dice-game began.
But after he lost himself –
let the Kauravas decide
whose lord he is now."

23 Suddenly (continued Vaiśampāyana),
from the *agnihotṛ*-sacrifice-room
of rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra, a jackal
howled. Asses brayed.
Fearful birds began croaking
from all directions.

24 All-knowing Vidura and
Subala's daughter Gāndhārī
understood the omens.
Bhīṣma and Kṛpa also
understood and cried, "*Svasti*!
Svasti! Peace! Peace!"

25 Gāndhārī and learned Vidura,
interpreting the omens,
went to Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and in great anguish
told him everything.
The rājā said:

26 "Ill-minded Duryodhana!
You are finished!
To insult in such
foul language Draupadī,
the dharma-*patnī*
of the Kaurava chiefs!"

27 Wise Dhṛtarāṣṭra
thought over the matter
with careful reflection
and, wishing to save his race
from destruction, consoled Draupadī
with these words:

28 "Pāñcāli-Draupadī!
Foremost of my daughters-in-law,
chaste and dharma-devoted lady,
ask any boon of me."

29 "O bull-brave Bharata!"
replied Draupadī.
"Let handsome, all-dharma-chenshing Yudhiṣṭhira
be freed from slavery,

30 So that foolish children later
will not think
of my intelligent son Prativindhya
as the son of a slave.

31 He was born a prince,
noblest of men; brought up by rājās;
it is not right
that he be called a slave's son."

32 "Lady of auspiciousness," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"so let it be.
Gracious lady! Ask a second boon.
I will gladly grant it.
My heart is eager to give you another.
You deserve more than one."

33 "Grant me this, O rājā," said Draupadī,
"that Bhīma, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
and the twins are returned
their bows and chariots, and are freed."

34 "Mahā-fortune-favoured lady,"
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra, "so it will be.
Ask a third, my daughter.
Two boons are not enough honour for you,
O dharma-following lady,
best of my daughters-in-law."

35 "*Bhagavan*! Revered one," said Draupadī,
"greed ruins dharma.
I do not deserve a third boon.
O finest of rājās, I do not know what to ask.

36 O Indra-among-rājās!
It is said that a Vaiśya
can ask for one boon,
a Kṣatriya lady two,
a Kṣatriya man three,
a Brahmin one hundred.

37 My husbands, O rājā,
freed from the pit of slavery,
will know how to find prosperity
by doing good deeds."

SECTION SEVENTY-TWO

1 “I have heard of many excellent women,”
exclaimed Karṇa,
“but not one of them ever did anything
like this.

2 When Pṛthā-Kuntī’s sons and Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s sons
lost their heads,
Kṛṣṇā, daughter of Drupada,
calmed the Pāṇḍavas.

3 Pāṇḍu’s sons were sinking boatless
in an ocean of humiliation,
and Pāñcālī-Draupadī became
their boat of rescue.”

4 Bhīma heard the words –
“A woman became their boat of rescue” –
and, angered and afflicted,
he said:

5 “Devala taught us that these three –
children, deeds, and learning –
illuminate a person;
from them starts all creation.

6 When life declines, and body decays,
and death comes,
these three survive
and help the dead person.

7 By molesting Draupadī
they have dimmed one light for us.
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, how can children born
to a defiled wife touched by another redeem us?”

8 Arjuna replied: “Bharata-Bhīma!
Noble minds do not worry over insults
spoken or not spoken
by little minds.

9 Self-respecting men,
even when in a position to hit back,
remember only the good deeds of others,
not their malice."

10 "Tell me, Yudhiṣṭhira, Indra-among-rājās,
said Bhīma, "shall I wipe them out all here,
or shall I exterminate them
outside the palace?

11 What is there to think about, Bharata descendant?
Why do you have to order us?
I'll kill all of them now, here,
and you can rule the world unchallenged."

12 Bhīma stood with his younger brothers
and glanced fiercely around him,
as a lion glares at a herd
of baby deer.

13 Arjuna tried to calm him
with appealing looks,
but mahā-muscled Bhīma seemed
to be burning with anger.

14 O lord of men Janamejaya! It seemed that smoke,
sparks, even flames were issuing
from his ears and other sense-organs –
such was his wrath.

15 Fearful his face at that time –
like that of Yama, the god of death,
with furrowed forehead,
at the time of the end of a yuga.

16 Yudhiṣṭhira clasped him warmly,
trying to dissuade magnificently-muscled Bhīma:
"No, Bhīma. Not now.
Be silent. Keep calm."

17 When red-eyed mahā-muscled Bhīma's anger
had cooled,
Yudhiṣṭhira approached his uncle Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
offered him *añjali*, and said:

SECTION SEVENTY-THREE

1 “Rājā, you are our lord.
Order us to do what should be done.
O Bharata descendant,
we will obey you.”

2 Dhṛtarāṣṭra replied: “You who have no enemy,
Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira, may you prosper.
Go and rule your kingdom.
This is my command.

3 Listen carefully to the words
of this old man,
whose advice is wholesome
and will benefit you.

4 Child, *tāta,* mahā-wise Yudhiṣṭhira,
you know how subtle dharma is.
You are humble,
you always respect elders.

5 Where wisdom is, peace is.
Take everything calmly.
Go in peace. Axe will not cut stone:
it falls on wood only.

6 Superior men are those who forget
the hostility of their enemies,
see only their merits,
and do not think of revenge.

7 Good men are those who remember
only the good deeds of their enemies,
not any conspired evil.
The good do good selflessly.

8 Only the meanest men use foul words
in a quarrel. Average men reply back.
Superior men are patient,
they ignore bitter words, and keep silent.

9 Good men judge
by their own goodness,
and so find goodness in others.
They remember only the good,

10 They leave out all the bad.
You have acted as a good man should,
you have behaved nobly
in this assembly.

11 *Tāta*, child, do not take to heart
the harshness of Duryodhana.
Think of the good –
think of your mother Gāndhārī and me.

12 O Bharata descendant! Look at me, your father:
I am old and blind.
I allowed the dice-game to be held
because I wanted

13 To meet my friends,
and see the strengths and weaknesses
of my children.
O rājā! You need not fear

14 Anything, for you follow the advice
of learned-in-all-the-śāstras Vidura.
You have dharma, Arjuna has patience,
Bhīma has valour,

15 And these finest-among-men have śraddhā
and regard for gurus.
You who have no enemy, Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira,
go with my blessings

16 To Khāṇḍavaprastha.
Let brotherly affection again
unite all of you.
Keep your mind fixed always on dharma."

17 O finest of Bharatas Janamejaya!
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
Yudhiṣṭhira listened, and,
after the traditional courtesies,
he set out with his brothers
for Khāṇḍavaprastha.

18 Accompanied by Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
the brothers climbed
into their cloud-like chariots, and drove off
to the excellent city Indraprastha.

SECTION SEVENTY-FOUR

1 Janamejaya asked:
"What did the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra feel
when they learnt
that the Pāṇḍavas,
on Dhṛtarāṣṭra's order,
had left with all their wealth?"

2 O bull-brave Bharata Janamejaya!
When Duḥśāsana discovered
(continued Vaiśampāyana) –
that the Pāṇḍavas had left
on wise Dhṛtarāṣṭra's order,
he rushed to his brother.

3 He found Duryodhana
surrounded by his advisers in the sabhā.
He spoke in great sorrow
(continued Vaiśampāyana):

4 "Listen to me, mahā-chariot-heores!
The old man's thrown away the wealth
we won after such trouble!
He's given all our wealth to our enemies!"

5 Duryodhana, Karṇa,
and the son of Subala, Śakuni –
all of them proud and conspiratorial –
put their heads together.

6 They devised a plot against the Pāṇḍavas.
They went to Victravīrya's wise son
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and Duryodhana
said these sweet and shrewd words:

7 "Father, there is no archer
in this world like Arjuna.
Two-handed Arjuna's skill equals that
of thousand-handed Kārtavīrya-Arjuna.

8 Let me describe to you
the marvellous feats of Arjuna:
First of all, it was Arjuna
who showed his skill

9 In the magnificent svayamvara of Draupadī,
doing what others could not.
He routed
the angry kings present there.

10 Mahā-powerful Arjuna defeated them all –
there is no doubt of that.
Even Karṇa at that time
was humbled by Arjuna.

11 He won Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī exactly
as Bhīṣma in the past
carried away Ambā and other daughters
of Kāśī's king.

12 After this, dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna
undertook a pilgrimage to the holy places.
Requested by Ulūpī,
the Nāga rājā's daughter,

13 He married her.
He went south to the Godavarī,
Veṇa and Kāverī rivers,
and bathed in each of them.

14 There, on the southernmost tip of the land,
in Kumārī-tīrtha,
he showed great valour in freeing
the five apsarās
who had assumed the forms
of fierce crocodiles.

15 Having visited the Kanyā-tīrtha,
he returned to Dvārakā. On Krishna's advice
Phālguna-Arjuna carried away Subhadrā
and took her in his chariot to Indraprastha.

16 Listen to the stories of Phālguna-Arjuna's courage!
Dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna
had agreed to let the god Agni
consume the Khāṇḍava forest.

17 With the result, O rājā,
that Bhagavan Havyavāhana-Agni,
encouraged, decided to devour
the Khāṇḍava forest.

18 When Vibhāvasu-Agni began consuming
 the forest, Arjuna, in his chariot,
with his bow and arrows,
 shot a steady stream of arrows
to ensure that the fire-god
 was not disturbed.

19 And Mahendra-Indra ordered the clouds
 to drench the burning forest.
A torrential downpour fell
 on Khāṇḍava.

20 An incredible thing happened:
 Arjuna released a volley
of anti-cloud missiles to frustrate
 the torrents of rain.

21 Purandara-Indra, incensed,
 mounted his white elephant Airāvata
and led a host of gods
 to battle with Arjuna.

22 Rudra-Śiva, the Maruts, Vasus,
 the Aśvins, Ādityas,
Sādhyas, Viśvadevas –
 all these deities, O Bharata,

23 Resplendent in their glory,
 carrying various weapons,
launched an attack on Arjuna
 intending to kill him.

24 When after respeated assaults
 they discovered that Pārtha-Arjuna
was firm on the battlefield,
 they retreated.

25 The fearful signs that are supposed
 to be seen at yuga-end,
were all witnessed
 on that occasion.

26 The hosts of gods re-formed,
 and attacked a second time,
but Pārtha-Arjuna remained firm;
 he behaved as if nothing had happened.

27 With bow and sharp-tipped arrows
Phālguma-Arjuna stood, facing Śakra-Indra
and the gods, like the figure of Kāla himself
at the end of the worlds.

28 Purandara-Indra and the gods, continuing the attack,
showered a stream of arrows
in the direction
of dreadful-dead-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna.

29 Mahā-energetic Arjuna, with his Gāṇḍiva bow,
had no difficulty at all
in deflecting the arrows
of the gods.

30 O lord of the world,
the mahā-powerful furious gods decided
to let loose their entire armoury
on ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna.

31 Again, Partha-Arjuna's arrows intercepted
their various missiles
and splintered them in twos and threes
in mid-air.

32 Pārtha-Arjuna stretched his bow
till it became almost a full maṇḍala circle,
and shot fierce, wounding arrows
at the gods.

33 When mahā-radiant Purandara-Indra
saw the gods scatter helter-skelter,
infuriated, he enveloped Pārtha-Arjuna
in a cloud of arrows.

34 Though a mere mortal,
Arjuna bewildered Śakra-Indra with his prowess.
The rājā of the gods Indra next
hurled huge boulders at Arjuna.

35 Ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna shot arrows
that pulverized the stones.
Indra hurled a second,
bigger stone-shower on him.

36 This time too, delighting Pākaśāsana-Indra,
Arjuna succeeded
in shooting special arrows
to frustrate the attack.

37 Hoping to crush white-vehicled Arjuna,
Indra lifted Aṅgada hill with its forests
and flung it
at Kuntī's son.

38 Arjuna shot a series
of fire-tipped, piercing arrows
that rent that-rājā-of-a-hill apart.
Śakra-Indra retired, defeated.

39 Mahārājā! Śakra-Indra realised then that
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna was invincible in battle.
Vāsava-Indra embraced his heroic son,
and expressed his pleasure.

40 There was no one in heaven,
no hero, not even a Prajāpati,
who could dream
of vanquishing Arjuna.

41 Mahā-valiant Pārtha-Arjuna successively routed
the yakṣas, rākṣasas, and nāgas,
and consigned them into the flames
for Agni.

42 Knowing that Arjuna had humbled
Śakra-Indra and the gods,
none at that time dared so much
as look at Arjuna.

43 Even as lovely-feathered Suparṇa-Garuḍa in the past
routed the gods for soma-amṛta,
Arjuna routed the gods
to please Pāvaka-Agni.

44 Having gratified the fire-god Vibhāvasu-Agni,
Arjuna collected from him
all kinds of weapons:
chariots, horses, armours,

45 The Gāṇḍīva bow, and two inexhaustible
arrow-filled quivers. More:
Dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna
had a splendid palace constructed for him.

46 O Indra-among-rājās! Listen to some more exploits!
He went north and overran
the cities and the nine regions
of Jambū island.

47 O bull-brave Bharata! He annexed Jambū island
exacted tribute from its chiefs,
and collected an enormous treasure
of jewels

48 Before returning to his kingdom.
He made preparations
for the massive Rājasūya of his elder brother,
mahā-ātmaned Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira

49 *Tāta*, dear father, these are some
of Arjuna's countless exploits.
There is none in this world
who can rival Arjuna.

50 Gods, anti-gods, yakṣas,
piśacas, *uraga*-nāgas, rākṣasas,
Bhīṣma and Droṇa,
and the Kaurava mahā-chariot-heroes;

51 All the kings of the world,
all the best archers –
these and other mighty heroes
together cannot harm Pārtha-Arjuna.

52 I think continually of Kaurava
Phālguna-Arjuna's excellent greatness,
and the more I think
the more I get depressed.

53 In every house I see Partha Arjuna
standing with his Gāṇḍīva bow,
like Antaka-Yama, god of death,
with his noose.

54 I am so upset that I see
hundreds of Pārtha-Arjunas everywhere.
This whole town
is filled with Pārtha-Arjunas.

55 *Tāta*! Dear father!
When I am alone, I see Pārtha-Arjuna;
in my dreams, I see Pārtha-Arjuna,
and I wake up afraid and troubled.

56 Words beginning with the letter A –
animal, affluence, Agni –
remind me harrowingly
of Arjuna.

57 I fear no hero but Pārtha-Arjuna.
I have the feeling
that Arjuna could defeat Bali
and Prahlāda if he liked.

58 Mahārāja! To fight him is to invite ruin
on our army.
I know the might of Arjuna.
That is why I suffer.

59 The mahā-valiant Rāma was frightened by Mārīca
in the Daṇḍ akāraṇya forest –
even so I am frightened
by Pārtha-Arjuna."

60 "*Tāta!* My son," replied Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"I know Jiṣṇu-Arjuna's prowess.
To fight Pārtha-Arjuna would be folly.
Therefore, do not provoke him.

61 Don't gamble with him,
don't challenge him to arms-duel –
these are ways
to become his enemies.

62 *Putra*! Son, make friends with Pārtha-Arjuna.
The man who's friendly with Arjuna
has nothing to fear
in the three worlds."

63 “O Kaurava! We did not play straight
in the dice-game. We took the help of māyā.
Find some other means of getting rid of Arjuna.
Help us, father!” said Duryodhana.

64 “Do no wrong to the Pāṇḍavas,”
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
“How often in the past have you tried
to get rid of Pṛtha-Kuntī’s sons!

65 Pṛtha-Kuntī’s sons escaped each time, and prospered.
If you, my son, your friends and brothers
really seek the welfare of the Kauravas,
make peace with Paṛtha-Arjuna.”

66 Rājā Duryodhana pondered
Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s words
(continued Vaiśampāyana);
then he said:

67 “Have you heard, O rājā,
how wise Bṛhaspati, the purohita of the gods,
once advised Śakra-Indra
on the ethics of politics?

68 He said: ‘Foe-vanquisher! Destroyer of enemies!
Use any means on hand
to wipe out enemies
who use force against you.’

69 What’s wrong if we use the wealth of the Pāṇḍavas.
to get us allies,
and use these allies
to destroy the Pāṇḍavas?

70 What chance have you though
if you place a poisonous snake
around your neck or back –
you will get bitten!

71 *Tāta*! Dear father, the emraged Pāṇḍavas
with their chariots and weapons –
they are like poisonous snakes,
they will kill us.

72 Even as I speak, Arjuna, in full armour,
with all his quivers,
is riding happily home,
fingering his Gāṇḍīva bow,
breathing hard,
and casting angry looks around him.

73 I am informed that
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
hastily ordered his chariot brought,
jumped inside,
and is now on his way home,
whirling his massive club.

74 And Nakula too – with his sword
and semi-circular shield in his hands –
and Sahadeva
and rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
both have made it quite clear
what their intentions are.

75 They are riding their weapons-loaded chariots,
and whipping their horses –
their armies
will be ready in no time.

76 We harmed them – so why should they forgive us?
Which man is there among them
who will forgive
Draupadī's humiliation?

77 Bull-brave Paurava! With your permission,
we'll gamble once more
with the Pāṇḍavas,
and send them into forest-exile.
This is the only way
we can control them.

78 Defeated in dice, it's them or us,
dressed in deerskin,
exiled into the forest
for twelve years.

79 They live, or we live!
Let's start the game!
Let's throw the dice!
Bring the Pāṇḍavas here!

80 This we *must* do, O bull-brave Bharata!
This is our greatest duty, O rājā!
Śakuni here
knows all about dice-play.

81 We will be firm lords of our kingdom;
we will make allies;
our massive armies
will keep the peace.

82 And if the Pāṇḍavas show their faces again,
after the thirteenth year,
we will be powerful enough to rout them.
O foe-crushing rājā! This is my plan."

83 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:
"Summon the Pāṇḍavas back,
no matter where they are.
Let there be one more dice-game."

84 Droṇa, Somadatta, Bāhlīka,
Kṛpa, Vidura,
the son of Droṇa Aśvatthāman,
the valiant son of a Vaiśyā Yuyutsu,

85 Bhūriśravas, Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma,
and the mahā chariot-warrior Vikarṇa –
all said,
"No! No dice-game. Let there be peace."

86 But Dhṛtarāṣṭra would not listen to advice
from friends and relatives.
Fond of his son,
he summoned the Pāṇḍavas.

SECTION SEVENTY-FIVE

1 Mahārāja! It was then (Vaiśampāyana continued)
that dharma-abiding Gāndhārī,
disturbed because she loved her sons,
said to lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

2 "When Duryodhana was born,
mahā-minded Vidura said,
'This boy will ruin our race;
better send him to the next world.'

3 Duryodhana brayed like a jackal
when he was born.
Oh, he will destroy our race.
Listen to this warning!

4 Great Bharata descendant,
don't sink in the ocean of ruin
if you can help it.
Prabhu! Lord! Don't listen
to these petty-minded sons of yours –
they are like little boys.

5 Don't be party
to the ruin of your race.
Why topple a bridge that's built?
Why re-kindle a dead fire?

6 O bull-brave Bharata,
why should anyone want
to stir up the gentle sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī?
Descendant of Ajamīḍha,
you already know this –
but I would like to remind you.

7 O rājā! Even the śāstras can teach nothing
of good or evil to a man
who's bent on mischief.
A naughty boy cannot be a wise adult.

8 Recover your authority over your sons.
Don't be party to their falling apart.
Listen to me –
and avoid this disgrace.

9 O rājā, you could not do this earlier
because you were fond of your son.
But now the price has to be paid.
If you don't act,
he will bring about
the doom of our race.

10 Let dharma and peace
and sanity guide
your mind now. Don't falter.
The wealth that evil brings
soon goes; the wealth
of good is lasting wealth."

11 Maharāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra said
to clear-in-dharma Gāndhārī:
"Doom will come if it will come.
I cannot stop it.

12 Let it be done according to their wishes.
Order the Pāṇḍavas back.
Let my sons gamble again
with Pāṇḍu's sons."

SECTION SEVENTY-SIX

1 Ordered by the wise rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
a messenger rushed to Yudhiṣṭhira
who was already a considerable distance
from Hastināpura.

2 "Descendant of Bharata! Yudhiṣṭhira!"
he shouted. "Your father says:
'The sabhā waits; come and play
the dice-game again'."

3 "Good and not-good," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"are gifts of Providence.
They will come, no matter what.
I must play.

4 The old monarch commands me
to play dice again.
I know it means my doom.
But I cannot refuse.

5 Rāma knew a golden deer couldn't be real,
yet he was tempted.
When doom is imminent,
thinking gets blurred."

6 Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers
returned to Hastināpura.
Despite suspecting Śakuni's dice-māyā,
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira played with him.

7 The mahā-chariot-heroes entered the sabhā
a second time;
their decision gave great sorrow
to their friends and well-wishers.

8 Impelled by fate,
they sat down in the sabhā to gamble,
knowing it would lead to the destruction
of all the worlds.

9 "Bull-brave Bharata," said Śakuni,
"your wealth has been restored to you
by the old king.
Good. Let's now stake differently –

10 If you defeat us in the dice-game,
we will wear deerskin
and go to the great forest
for twelve years,

11 The thirteenth year
to be spent in disguise
in an inhabited region.
If discovered, twelve years' exile again.

12 If we defeat you,
all of you and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
will wear deerskin
and go to the great forest for twelve years,

13 The thirteenth year
to be spent in disguise
in an inhabited region.
If discovered, twelve years' exile again.

14 When the thirteenth year is over,
either of us will be entitled
to full restoration
of the surrendered kingdom.

15 With this as stake, Yudhiṣṭhira,
let us start the game.
Come, O descendant of Bharata, throw the dice!
Let us begin!"

16 All those present in the sabhā
raised their arms
in trepidation
and started shouting angrily:

17 "Aho! Shame on Yudhiṣṭhira's relatives and friends!
Why don't they warn him
of the impending doom?
Show Yudhiṣṭhira what he refuses to see!"

18 Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
heard these remarks and was ashamed,
but, bound by dharma,
he began playing.

19 Aware of the evils of gambling,
mahā-intelligent Yudhiṣṭhira began playing,
certain that the doom of the Kauravas
was coming.

20 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "Śakuni,
how can a rājā like me
who knows what sva-dharma is,
refuse a challenge? Come!"

21 Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira
was under the spell of fate.
Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and wise Vidura
repeatedly

22 Urged him not to play again.
Yuyutsu, Sañjaya and Kṛpa urged him too.
Gāndhārī, Pṛthā-Kuntī, Bhīma, Arjuna,
the twins Nakula and Sahadeva,

23 Vikarṇa, Draupadī, Drona's son Aśvatthāman,
Somadatta, wise Bāhlīka,
kept urging him not to play,
but rājā Yudhiṣṭhira did not listen.

24 "Son of Pāṇḍu," Śakuni said,
"we have cattle, horses,
goats, sheep, elephants, jewels,
servants and gold, slave-girls, –

25 But we won't wager those.
We will stake exile in the forest
if we lose.
Whoever loses, goes into exile

26 For twelve years, the thirteenth
to be spent in disguise.
Bull-brave Bharatas! If you all agree to this,
let us begin!"

27 Hardly said by Śakuni (continued Vaiśampāyana)
than accepted by Yudhiṣṭhira.
Single throw. Forest exile. Śakuni threw the dice,
and exclaimed, "I win!"

SECTION SEVENTY-SEVEN

1 The defeated Pāṇḍavas (continued Vaiśampāyana)
began preparing for exile,
and put on upper garments
of deerskin.

2 Seeing the great foe-subduers
dressed in deerskin,
their kingdom lost, ready for exile,
Duḥśāsana said:

3 "Now begins rule of rājā Duryodhana,
the mahā-ātmaned son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
The Pāṇḍavas are finished,
their mifortunes have begun.

4 The gods are kind to us,
while the Pāṇḍavas walk the narrow path.
In wealth, in everything,
we excel!

5 Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons are plunged
into a prolonged hell –
their kingdom is gone for ever,
their happiness ended for ever.

6 Drunk with the pride of wealth,
they made fun of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons –
now they go destitute and grieving
into exile.

7 Throw your armours
aside, throw away
your divine dresses,
and put on *ruru*-deerskin,
according to the wager
made with Śakunī.

8 Once they would boast
they had no equals
in the whole world –
now they are reduced
to useless hollow
grains of sesame.

9 Even in *ruru*-deerskin
they look like wise
and mighty performers
of a yajña – but
they are not entitled
to perform any yajña.

10 Somaka's descendant
mahā-wise Drupada bestowed
his daughter on them –
it was foolish of him.
Yājñasenī-Draupadī's husbands
are a bunch of impotent men.

11 Draupadī, what pleasure
will you get living
with these husbands
in rags and skins,
without wealth and possessions?
Choose one of us!

12 The Kauravas you see here
are disciplined and
hugely wealthy men.
Choose one of them!
Don't let this disaster
ruin your future.

13 The Pāṇḍavas are like
hollow grains of sesame,
like puppets in deerskins,
like paddygrains without kernel.

14 Why do you want to serve
these fallen sons
of Pāṇḍu any more?
Wasted labour – that is spent
on grinding hollow
grains of sesame."

15 Duḥśāsana spoke these cruel words
(Vaiśampāyana continued)
in the presence
of the Pāṇḍavas.

16 Impetuous Bhīma rushed at him
like a lion of the Himālayas
at a jackal.
Bhīma said:

17 "Cruel swine!
You speak like a raving rascal!
Because Śakuni has won,
you dare to boast like this.

18 Just as you pierce our hearts
with these arrow-like words,
I'll pierce you in battle –
and you'll remember them then!

19 I'll send you to the realm of Yama,
along with all your relatives and friends
who are blinded today
by anger and greed."

20 Shamelessly dancing
in the middle of the Kauravas,
Duḥśāsana mocked Bhīma,
"Ho cow! Ho cow!"
Deerskin-dressed Bhīma did nothing,
dharma prevented him.

21 "Scoundrel Duḥśāsana!" Bhīma shouted,
"It's right that you should speak so foully,
having won our wealth
by cheating at dice!

22 Listen to me! If Kuntī's wolf-waisted son Bhīma
does not tear open your breast
and drink your blood in battle,
may the heaven of good deeds never be his!

23 I will kill all the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
in battle –
I promise this in front of all –
and so appease my anger!"

24 As the Pāṇḍavas walked
out of the sabhā,
ill-minded rājā Duryodhana,
flushed with joy,
starting mimicking the proud,
lion-like gait of Bhīma.

25 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
half-turned and said,
"You fool, don't think
this makes you lord.
I'll kill you and your followers!
Regret it then!"

26 Proud, mighty Bhīma
suppressed the billowing
anger in him
and followed rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
Before leaving the sabhā,
he shouted out:

27 "I will kill Duryodhana.
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna will kill Karṇa.
And Sahadeva will kill
the gambler Śakuni.

28 Listen to me, you gods,
I take in this sabhā this vow
of killing them,
should we fight a war.

29 I will kill vicious Suyodhana-Duryodhana
in a mace-duel.
I'll dash him on the ground,
and place my foot on his head.

30 And foul-mouthed ill-ātmaned Duḥśāsana,
who is so bold in words now –
I will drink his blood
like a lion drinking a deer's blood."

31 Arjuna said, "Bhīma, men who do things
don't shout like this.
Let them find out
in the fourteenth year."

32 Bhīma shouted,
"This earth will drink the blood
of Duryodhana, Karṇa,
wicked Śakuni and Duḥśāsana.

33 "Very well, Bhīma," said Arjuna,
"I will kill in battle Karṇa –
this mean, jealous,
boastful, foul-mouthed man.

34 Arjuna promises this to please Bhīma –
he will kill in battle
with his arrows Karṇa
and all the followers of Karṇa.

35 I will despatch to the realm of Yama
all the other kings
whose folly makes them
take up arms against me.

36 If I fail to do this,
then let the Himālayas topple,
let the day-making sun fade,
the moon shrivel!

37 Fourteen years from now,
all this will happen,
if Duryodhana refuses to return
our kingdom to us."

38 Powerful, handsome Sahadeva, Mādrī's son,
heard Arjuna,
and, waving his splendidly-
proportioned arms,

39 And deep-sighing like a snake
with his burning desire
to kill Subala's son Śakuni, he said,
his eyes flaming:

40 "Fool, ruination of the race of Gāndhāra,
what you think are dice
are not dice.
Look!
They are sharp arrows,
they invite you to battle.

41 I will do all that Bhīma
has said today.
Before that day comes, go,
enjoy yourself.

42 Son of Subala, I will kill you
and your friends and your relatives,
if you fight
by the rules of Kṣatriya-dharma."

43 Nakula heard Sahadeva
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and that handsome man
said loudly:

44 "These sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
who insulted Yājñasenī-Draupadī
in order to please Duryodhana
in the gambling sabhā,

45 These death-wishing,
Kāla-impelled scoundrels –
I promise I will despatch them all
to Vaivasvata-Yama's realm.

46 When Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira commands me,
I will remember the wrongs done to Draupadī,
and rid the earth
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons."

47 The tigers-among-men Pāṇḍavas
took all these vows
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and went to Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

SECTION SEVENTY-EIGHT

1 Yudhiṣṭhira said:
"This is my farewell to the descendants of Bharata,
Pitāmaha Bhīṣma,
rājā Somadatta, mahārāja Bāhlīka,

2 Droṇa, Kṛpa,
and all the other kings here;
to Vidura, Aśvatthāman, Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons;

3 To Yuyutsu, Sañjaya,
and the officers of the court.
Farewell. But I will return.
We will meet again."

4 All those present were too ashamed
to openly say anything,
but inwardly
they wished wise Yudhiṣṭhira well.

5 Vidura said:
"Kuntī is of royal blood,
she is old, lovely-limbed;
she has never known any misfortune.
She should not go
to the forest.

6 Let the virtuous lady stay with me.
She can stay in my house.
I will look after her, honourably.
Think of this, sons of Pṛtha-Kuntī.
May you go safely,
you have my blessings."

7 The Pāṇḍavas replied: "Defectless one,
we will follow your advice.
You are our uncle,
but to us
you are like our father.
We will obey you.

8 You are our guru,
the person we most revere.
Mahā-minded one,
tell us what else we should do."

9 Vidura said: "Bull-brave Yudhiṣṭhira,
my firm belief is that
the man defeated by adharma
should not feel humiliated.

10 You know all about dharma,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna wins battles,
Bhīma slays his foes,
and Nakula gathers wealth,

11 Sahadeva is a good administrator,
Dhaumya is learned in the Vedas,
and dharma-following Draupadī
knows dharma and artha.

12 You are close to each other,
you are happy with each other,
enemies cannot part you,
you are content.

13 This is the greatest asset in your favour,
O Bharata descendant.
No enemy, even one as strong as Śakra-Indra,
can shake you.

14 Merusāvarṇi instructed you
in the Himālayas;
Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana instructed you
in Vāraṇāvata,

15 Paraśurāma on the Bhṛgu-tuṅga mountain,
Śīva on the banks
of the Dṛṣṭadvatī river;
mahā-ṛṣi Asita
advised you
on Añjana hill;

16 You were Bhṛgu's disciples
on Kalmāṣī's banks.
Now Nārada and your purohita Dhaumya
will instruct you.

17 Never ignore the pūjā-respected wisdom of ṛṣis
about the other world.
Pāṇḍu's sons,
you are wiser than Pururavas,

18 Mightier than any rājā,
more dharma-abiding than ṛṣis.
Win victories as Indra does,
check anger like Yama does,

19 Be generous like Kubera,
subdue passion like Varuṇa.
Please like the pleasing moon,
nourish like vital water,

20 Be patient like the earth,
radiant like the sun,
untiring like the wind,
flow like life flows.

21 May you prosper!
May no disease afflict you!
I will see you again.
In crisis of dharma and artha,

22 Show courage, Yudhiṣṭhira.
Son of Kuntī,
descendant of Bharata, go,
you have my blessing.

23 Let not anyone say
you were ever at fault.
We will see you
when you return in triumph here."

24 Devoted-to-truth Yudhiṣṭhira did namaskāra
to Bhīṣma and Droṇa
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and left.

SECTION SEVENTY-NINE

1 Before leaving, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī went
to illustrious Kuntī
and sought her permission;
she was grief-stricken. To the other ladies

2 She paid her respects
and embraced each lady as she deserved.
Loud wailing was heard
from the inner apartments.

3 Deeply moved by the sight of Draupadī
ready for forest-exile,
Kuntī said these words
in a trembling voice:

4 "My child, mourn no more
over this calamity.
You know a woman's dharma,
you have dignity and patience.

5 Sweet-smiling one,
I need not explain to you
your duty to your husbands.
Your purity and your accomplishments
have increased the lustre of both your family
and your husband's family.

6 The Kauravas are fortunate
that your wrath has not destroyed them.
Take my blessing –
May your journey be safe.

7 Good women are never distressed
by what they know is bound to happen.
Excelling dharma is yours,
and you will prosper.

8 Look after my son Sahadeva well
in the forest –
see that he does not succumb
to his misfortune."

9 Devī-Draupadī,
still in her blood-stained single dress,
her hair dishevelled, said, with tears in her eyes,
"I will do so."

10 She left, sobbing,
followed by Kuntī, also sobbing.
Kuntī saw her sons,
bereft of their dresses and jewels,

11 Wearing *ruru*-deerskin,
standing with bent heads,
surrounded by celebrating enemies
and pitying friends.

12 Excess of mother-love welled up
in Kuntī's heart,
seeing them in that state.
Embracing them, she said sadly:

13 "My sons, followers of dharma,
noble-charactered,
excellently-gifted, courtesy-showing,
high-thinking, always

14 Devoted to the service of superiors,
obedient to the wishes of the gods,
careful in the performance
of yajñas –

15 Why should this happen to you?
Why this misfortune on your heads?
Whose punishment and curse
have become yours?

16 Oh, it is all my fault,
I gave you birth!
And so you suffer today,
in spite of your excellent virtues!

17 You have energy, skill, patience, and power,
I know –
but how will you survive in the forest
without help?

18 If I had known you would be exiled
in the forest,
I would not have left Śataśṛṅga
and come to Hastināpura.

19 Now I realise how fortunate
your tapasyā-performing father was –
to be spared this –
and go to heaven instead.

20 Now I realise how fortunate
was noble and wise-in-dharma Mādrī –
foreknowing this would happen,
she chose death.

21 Mādrī depended on me –
all her mind and affections
were given to me. Why am I alive?
Why must I live and suffer?

22 My sons, I love you,
you are all excellent.
How I suffered to get you!
I cannot leave you now.
I will go with you – Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
why do you leave me behind?

23 All dharma-embodied creatures will die –
Whatever lives will die –
but the Creator has forgotten
to give me death.
I grow old, and I suffer.

24 Hai Krishna! Hai Krishna of Dvārakā!
Younger brother of Saṁkarṣaṇa-Balarāma,
where are you? Why don't you help me
and my best-among-men sons?

25 People say you are without beginning,
without end.
People say you are the saviour
of those who suffer.
Are these people liars?
Where are you now?

26 My sons had dharma, they were noble,
they were famous, they had prowess.
Do they deserve this?
Krishna, help them!

27 With men like Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa present –
leaders of our race,
rich in the wisdom
of artha and ethics,
how could this terrible calamity
fall on us?

28 Hai Pāṇḍu! Hai Mahārāja!
Where are you? How can you bear to see
your children cheated at dice
and sent into exile?

29 Sahadeva, don't go. I love you more
than I love myself.
Mādrī's son, don't leave me.
Don't be a bad son.

30 Let your brothers follow their truth –
let them go!
Let your dharma be a son's
who looks after his mother."

31 The Pāṇḍavas consoled lamenting Kuntī,
offered her their *praṇāmas,*
and sorrowfully left
for the forest.

32 It was left to Kṣattā-Vidura,
himself grieving,
to use reason with Kuntī.
He escorted her slowly into the house.

33 As Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira was leaving,
the city's inhabitants,
distressed, watched from balconies,
roofs and trees.

34 The streets were so crowded
it was impossible to walk,
for which reason
people chose high perches.

35 Umbrella-less, Yudhiṣṭhira walked on foot,
his body without
its royal dress and ornaments.
He had only a deerskin on.
Seeing him, they were touched;
they murmured among themselves:

36 *Once the four-fold armies*
accompanied him –
today he walks with Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
his four brothers, and his purohita.

37 *Once even the sky-roaming winds*
could not see her –
today Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī walks on the street,
seen by all men.

38 *Once she adorned herself*
with jewels and red saffron;
soon heat, cold, and rain
will rob her of her beauty.

39 *How strong of mind must Kuntī devī be*
to be able to see, without collapsing,
her sons and daughter-in-law
in this condition!

40 *It is painful enough for a mother*
to see a guilty son suffer;
how can she bear the suffering
of innocent sons?

41 *Foremost-among-men Yudhiṣṭhira shone*
with gentleness, mercy,
patience, fortitude, self-control, and intelligence.
Now he's gone.

42 *When a pool dries up, fish die;*
when roots wither,
flowers and fruits disappear;
Yudhiṣṭhira gone, the world suffers.

43 *Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira is the world's root,*
others are branches and leaves,
fruits and flowers.
Let us all today, with all our

44 *Friends and relatives, our wives,*
and children,
follow Yudhiṣṭhira and the Pāṇḍavas
into the forest.

45 *Let us leave our homes and fields*
and follow Yudhiṣṭhira;
his joys are our joys,
his sorrows our sorrows.

46 *Let's dig our wealth out,*
and take it with us.
Let's take all necessary articles with us.
Let the homes

47 *Be emptied, let the gods desert them,*
let rats scamper in them.
Let no fires burn,
no water wash them.

48 *Let there be no yajñas here,*
no mantras, no rituals.
Let a great famine, as it were,
take over; let the houses

49 *Crumble and decay.*
Let pots and pans lie scattered.
We will leave them behind
for Subala's son Śakuni to enjoy.

50 *Let the forest of the Pāṇḍavas*
become our new city,
and this city turn
into an empty wilderness.

51 *And when we enter the forest,*
snakes, tigers and elephants will flee –
birds too –
and it will be ours.

52 *We are tillers of land,*
we will grow vegetables.
Let flesh-eating animals
leave the forest for us.
We will settle there,
and serve the sons of Kuntī.

53 Yudhiṣṭhira heard the people
expressing their feelings in this way
as he passed by
(continued Vaiśampāyana)

54 Drawing aside their window-curtains,
Brahmin, Kśatriya,
Vaiśya and Śūdra ladies
looked at the Pāṇḍavas

55 Dressed in deerskin,
with Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī walking beside them.
They had never seen her before.
She had a single dress on.

56 She was in her period,
her hair was dishevelled.
Seeing her, they were moved to tears.
Loud sounds of lamentation

57 Emerged from the windows:
"Hai! Hai!
Shame on the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
Shame on them!"

58 The ladies of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's court
received news
of the disrobing of Draupadī in the sabhā
and the exile of the Pāṇḍavas,

59 And they wept uncontrollably,
and condemned the Kauravas.
Then they were silent,
covering their lotus faces with their hands.

60 Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra, realising the injustice
done by his sons, was so disturbed
that he could not get
any peace of mind.

61 He recalled all that had happened
and, distraught with uneasiness,
he summoned Vidura summarily
before him.

62 Vidura went to the palace of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and that lord of men,
deeply agitated,
plied him with questions.

SECTION EIGHTY

1 As soon as far-seeing Vidura came
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Dhṛtarāṣṭra, son of Ambikā,
began asking him:

2 "How is Kuntī and Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
faring on the journey?
And Bhima and Savyasācī-Arjuna?
And the twins, Mādrī's sons?

3 And how is Dhaumya, O Vidura?
And how is illustrious Draupadī faring?
Tell me everything.
Give me all the details."

4 "Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira is walking
covering his face with his dress;
Bhīma stares at his massive arms,
and keeps on walking.

5 Ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna
scatters sand as he walks behind Yudhiṣṭhira.
Mādrī's son Sahadeva
has smeared mud on his face.

6 Nakula, handsomest of men,
follows rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, sorrowfully;
he has rubbed dust
on his face.

7 Large-eyed, lovely Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
follows rājā Yudhiṣṭhira;
her dishevelled tresses cover
her tear-bathed face.

8 O lord of the earth!
Dhaumya walks with *kuśa*-grass in his hand,
chanting the horrific mantras in the Sāma-Veda
relating to Yama, god of death."

9 "Why are the Pāṇḍavas
behaving so strangely?" asked Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
"All of them seem
to be saying something."

10 "Insulted by your sons,
robbed of his wealth and kingdom,"
said Vidura, "Yudhiṣṭhira has not strayed
from dharma.

11 Rājā-Yudhiṣṭhira still feels for your sons.
His kingdom was snatched by wrong means,
he is angry,
but he does not open his eyes,

12 For he thinks:
I will not burn them with eyes of wrath.
And so, the rājā covers his face
with a part of his dress.

13 As for Bhīma, let me explain.
Bhīma thinks:
There is no one with arms strong like mine.
O bull-brave Bharata,

14 Bhīma is proud of the strength
of his arms.
He flexes his muscles all the time,
O rājā, and bares them,

15 Wanting to display heroic feats with them.
Kuntī's son, Savyasācī-Arjuna,
who uses both arms
with equal skill,

16 Trails behind Yudhiṣṭhira,
scattering grains of sand –
this is his way of showing how many arrows
he will shoot in battle.

17 How easily he scatters the sand!
With equal ease will he shoot arrows
at his enemies.
Let none see me humiliated like this,

18 Thinks Sahadeva, and smears mud on his face.
Nakula fears
he might steal ladies' hearts,
so he rubs dust on his face.

19 Draupadī is in her period,
wearing her blood-stained single-cloth dress;
her hair is all dishevelled;
she weeps and says:

20 'In the fourteenth year from now,
the wives of those
who have molested me today
will be deprived of their husbands,

21 Sons, and relatives. Hair dishevelled,
in their periods, smeared with blood,
they will all enter Hastināpura
after offering oblations of water
to the spirits
of their dead husbands.'

22 The learned and self-disciplined purohita Dhaumya
holds the *kuśa*-grass
pointing south-west in his hand,
and chants mantras from the Sāma-Veda,

23 As if saying: 'When all the descendants of Bharata
perish in the war,
the Kaurava purohitas will chant
from the Sāma-Veda.'

24 *Hai! Hai! our lords are leaving us*
and going away!
Shame on the Kuru elders
who have behaved so foolishly

25 *And shown their greed by banishing*
the heirs of Pāṇḍu!
We will have no leaders left
with the Pāṇḍavas gone.

26 *How can we ever feel affection*
for the wicked and greedy Kauravas?
Such are the weeping words
of the suffering citizens.

27 Kuntī's sons have now all gone
into the forest,
but before going have revealed
all their innermost thoughts.

28 When they left Hastināpura,
lightning suddenly blazed forth
from a cloudless sky,
the earth shuddered,

29 Rāhu began devouring the sun
although no eclipse
had been indicated,
meteors fell on the left of the city.

30 Jackals, vultures, crows
and other scavenging birds and beasts
howled in temples, near sacred trees,
from walls and housetops.

31 These terrible and marvellous omens
were seen and heard,
predicting Bharata doom
proceeding from your evil advice."

32 While rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra and wise Vidura
were talking
in this way (continued Vaiśampāyana),
there suddenly turned up

33 At the sabhā, in the midst of the Kauravas,
Nārada and other mahā-ṛṣis.
He uttered
these fearful words:

34 "In the fourteenth year from now,
this mischief of Duryodhana
will cause the total destruction of the Kauravas,
through Arjuna and Bhīma's prowess."

35 Saying this, the celestial ṛṣi,
gifted with all graces,
seemed to soar into the sky,
as he disappeared from sight.

36 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:
"Kṣattā-Vidura, tell me what the citizens said
when the Pāṇḍavas were leaving the city."

37 Vidura replied:
"Mahārāja! Let me tell you what Brahmins, Kṣatriyas,
Vaiśyas, Śūdras and others said.

38 They were deeply afflicted. They said: 'Hai! Hai!
Our lords, our protectors are leaving us.'

39 The men, women and children of Hastināpura
were plunged in grief.

40 They lost all hopes of joy.
They appeared to be struck down with disease.
They murmured sorrowfully among themselves.

41 With the departure of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
the Kaurava elders were afflicted
with sorrow.

42 The entire city was united in a common grief.
The Brahmin of the city said:

43 'How will Dharmātmā Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
and his brothers survive in the forest?
And how will Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
daughter of Drupada, used to comforts –
how will she survive the forest?' "

44 Vidura continued:
"The Brahmins, their wives and their children
thought of the Pāṇḍavas and were deeply
distressed.

45 Like people wounded by sharp weapons,
they suffered.
When spoken to, they did not respond.

46 They did not take their meals in the morning
and at night. They could not sleep.
They seemed to be without feeling,
as if paralysed.

47 Like the inhabitants of Ayodhyā
after Ramā and Lakṣmaṇa
went into forest exile,

48 Were the inhabitants of Hastināpura
when the Pāṇḍava brothers
went to the forest."

49 These words of Vidura sent
Dhṛtarāṣṭra and his friends and advisers
into a fresh bout of sense-stealing sorrow.

50 Duryodhana, Karṇa
and Subala's son Śakuni,
thinking of Droṇa as their island of refuge,
offered him the kingdom.

51 Droṇa said to haughty Duryodhana,
Duḥśāsana, Karṇa
and the other Bharatas
in the sabhā:

52 "Brahmins say the Pāṇḍavas are sons of gods
and cannot be killed.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons,
with all their armies,

53 Now seek my help.
I will help as best as I can.
How can I refuse them?
What will happen, will happen.

54 Pāṇḍu's sons, defeated at dice,
have gone to the forest
as ordained by dharma.
They will be there for twelve years

55 Practising brahmacarya.
Then they will return
to our great consternation
and take a terrible revenge.

56 O rājā! A long time ago,
I quarrelled with Drupada
and took away his kingdom,
so Drupada did a yajña to obtain
a son who would be powerful enough
to kill me.

57 With the tapasyā of essential
and supplementary sacrifices
he obtained a son Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
and a daughter Draupadī, both yajña-born.

58 Dhṛṣṭadyumna is the Pāṇḍavas'
brother-in-law;
he is always eager to please them.
I am afraid of him.

59 He's of divine-birth,
radiant like the yajña-fire,
born with bow, arrows and armour.
I am mortal. I fear him.

60 Subduer-of-his-enemies,
Drupada's son Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna
stands at the head
of all the great chariot-warriors.

61 If he and I clash in battle,
I know I will die.
Tell me, Kauravas,
could anything worse befall me?

62 'Dhṛṣṭadyumna will kill Droṇa' –
that is what all say.
I have heard he was born expressly
to kill me. All know this.

63 The time has come for you
to make up your minds.
Doom is on us.
Do quickly what you think is best.

64 In winter the palm-tree's shade
falls all too briefly on its roots.
Your days of pleasure
will be all too brief.

65 Perform yajñas; enjoy what you can;
give away freely.
The fourteenth year is coming –
the end is near."

66 Dhṛtarāṣṭra heard Droṇa and said:
"Kṣattā-Vidura,
what the guru says is true.
Go, bring back the Pāṇḍavas.

67 If they refuse to return, let them go,
but give them respect and affection;
give them weapons,
soldiers, chariots,
to make their going comfortable –
they are my children."

SECTION EIGHTY-ONE

1 The exile of the Pāṇḍavas
after their defeat at dice
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
troubled mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra deeply.

2 Lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra was sitting in the court
one day, worried and restless,
sighing all the time,
when Sañjaya came to him.

3 "Lord of the world," said Sañjaya,
"the Pāṇḍavas are gone –
the whole world is now yours –
why is your majesty sad?"

4 "Why not?" said Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
"Why shouldn't one grieve
if he knows he will one day
have to face the Pāṇḍavas in battle?"

5 Sañjaya said: "Rājā,
this momentous deed of yours
will one day breed hostility enough
to destroy the world.

6 Bhīṣma, Droṇa and Vidura
were all against it –
yet the dharma-devoted wife
of the Pāṇḍavas, Draupadī,

7 Was brought here by a messenger, a son of a Sūta,
on special orders
from your wicked and shameless son
Duryodhana.

8 The gods first drive mad the man
they want to see destroyed.
He can not see straight –
all is topsy-turvy to him.

9 When a man's doom is near,
evil sticks to his wicked mind
which sees it as good.
Improper becomes proper,

10 And proper seems improper.
A man on the verge
of his own ruin
enjoys his own madness.

11 Kāla does not come
with an upraised mace –
Kāla makes his victim see good as evil
and evil as good.

12 The scoundrels who dragged
the pure Pāñcāla princess Draupadī
in this sabhā have brought a total,
horripilating doom on themselves.

13 Who other than that expert
dice-cheat Duryodhana
would have dared insult
in the open sabhā

14 Drupada's daughter,
a lady of grace and beauty,
in every way a dharma-abiding wife,
not womb but yajña-born?
The lovely-hipped lady was in her period,
in a blood-stained

15 Single dress. Pāñcāla-Draupadī saw
the Pāṇḍavas cheated
of their wealth, kingdom, robes,
beauty, cheated of

16 Every article of enjoyment they possessed,
and enslaved.
Abiding by dharma, they remained passive
all through.

17 In front of all the Kauravas,
Duryodhana and Karṇa
showered abuse on suffering angry Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
who did not deserve it."

18 "Sañjaya," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"Draupadī's angry looks
can shrivel this world.
Do my sons have any chance?

19 The Bharata ladies, including Gāndhāri,
seeing Draupadī dragged here,
wept out loud.
They are still disconsolate.

20 Furious at the treatment of dharma-following
dharma-*patnī* Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
all Brahmins refused to perform the *agnihotṛ* ritual
in the evening.

21 Fierce winds rose,
as if universal doomsday
was at hand.
Shuddering thunderstorms blew.

22 Meteors were seen streaking
down the sky,
and Rāhu trying to snuff out the sun.
These unnatural omens

23 Struck mahā-horrific terror in the hearts
of my subjects.
A mysterious fire blazed up
in the chariot-sheds;

24 The flagstaffs crumpled and fell.
Jackals started wailing
in the *agnihotṛ* room
of Duryodhana.

25 Asses began braying in unison
with the wailing of the jackals.
The sabhā was deserted
by Bhīṣma, Droṇa,

26 Kṛpa, Somadatta,
and mahā-minded Bāhlīka.
On Vidura's advice, I said
to her,

27 'Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, ask any boons,
I will grant them.'
She asked that I free
the Pāṇḍavas from slavery,

28 Which I did –
I then ordered them to leave,
taking their chariots, and bows and arrows.
All-dharma-knowing Vidura said to me:

29 'The Bhārata race is doomed
because she was dragged
inside this sabhā –
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī is the goddess Śri herself,

30 Of divine birth. She is the daughter of the Pāñcāla rājā,
and wife of the Pāṇḍavas.
They will never forgive the insult
heaped on her today.

31 The Vṛṣṇi bowmen,
the Pāñcāla mahā-chariot-warriors
will never pardon this.
Helped by Vāsudeva-Krishna,

32 Dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna will return –
do not doubt that –
with all the Pāñcāla heroes.
The mahā-powerful mahā-bowman Bhīma

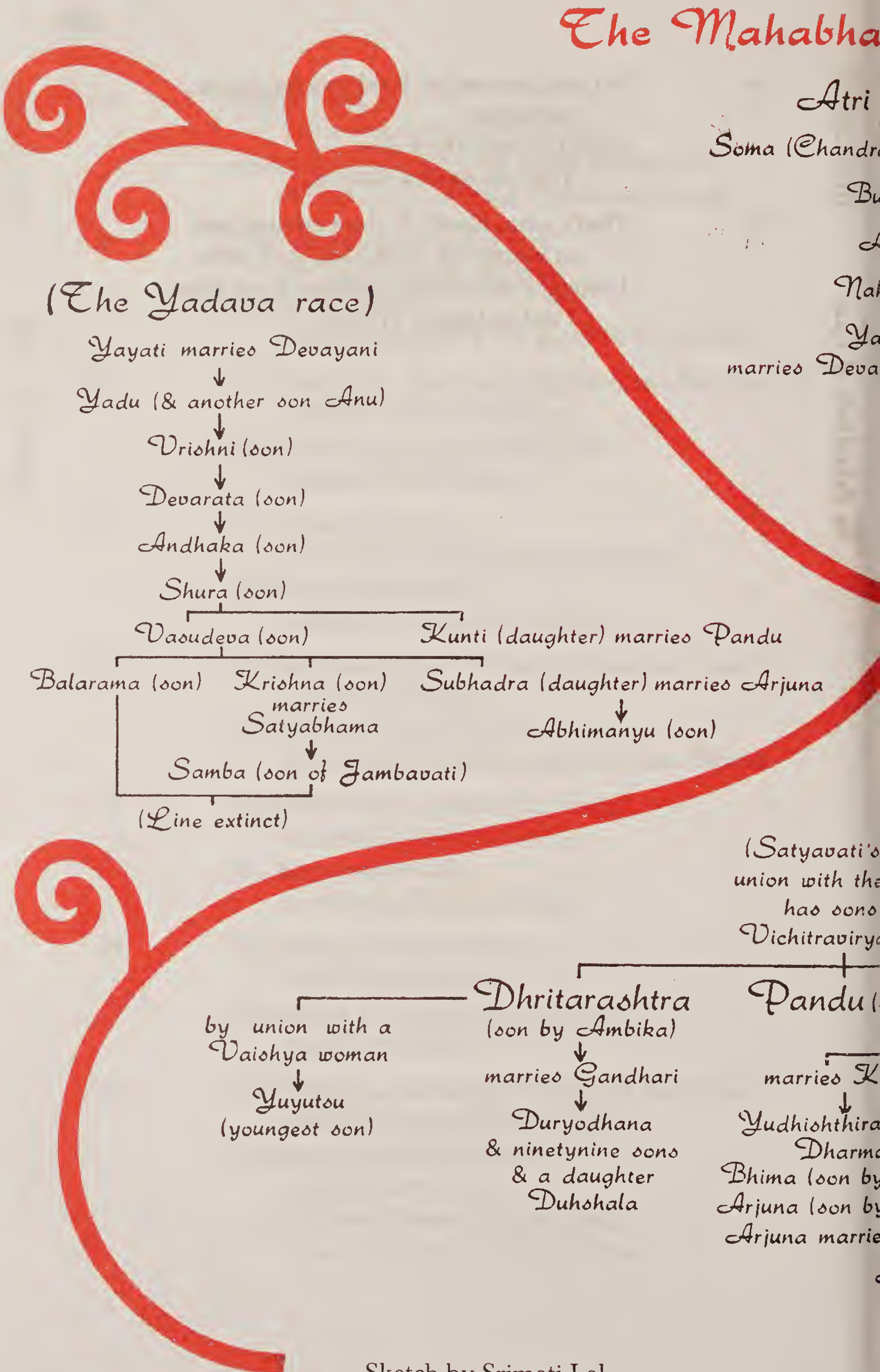
33 Will also return, whirling his mace
as Antaka-Yama whirls his.
No kings will be able
to withstand the onslaught

34 Of Arjuna's Gāṇḍīva bow
and Bhīma's mace.
My advice is – make peace quickly
with Kuntī's sons.

35 The Pāṇḍavas are stronger than the Kauravas.
Maha-radiant rājā Jarāsaṁdha
was done to death by Bhīma
with his bare arms.
O bull-brave Bharata Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
make peace with the Pāṇḍavas.

36 Do not let scruples hold you back now,
    mahārāja –
unite the two. Do it now.
    You still have a chance.'

37 That's what Kṣattā-Vidura advised me,
    in words full of dharma and artha.
I thought only of the welfare of my sons.
    I did not listen to him."



Sketch by Srimati Lal

ı Family Tree

Rishi

ıdu) the Moon

n)

.)

on)

n)

Sharmishtha

(The Paurava & Kaurava race)

Yayati marries Sharmishtha

↓

Puru (& 2 other sons, Druhyu & Turvasu)

↓

Dushyanta (son) marries Shakuntala

↓

Bharata (son)

↓

Hastin (son)

↓

Kuru (son)

↓

Shantanu (son) marries Satyavati

re-marriage union with Ganga

↓

Bhishma (son)

ısa
her pre-marriage
Parashara; Vyasa
two widows of
ika & Ambalika)

Chitrangada
(son) (dies childless)

Vichitravirya (son)
marries Ambika & Ambalika
(their eldest sister Amba,
reborn male as Shikhandin,
kills Bhishma in the war)

Ambalika)

Vidura (son by
low caste woman)

and

Madri

↓

Nakula & Sahadeva
(twin sons by Ashvins)

y

ı)

ı)

ıadra

ınyu (son) marries Uttara

↓

Parikshit (son)

↓

Janamejaya (son)



This internationally accepted system of Roman transliteration of the Devanāgari alphabet is followed in this transcreation.

VOWELS

Guttaral	अ	आ
	a	ā
Palatal	इ	ई
	i	ī
Labial	उ	ऊ
	u	ū
Dental	ऋ	
	ṛ	
Guttaral-Palatal	ए	ऐ
	e	ei
Guttaral-Labial	ओ	औ
	o	au

CONSONANTS

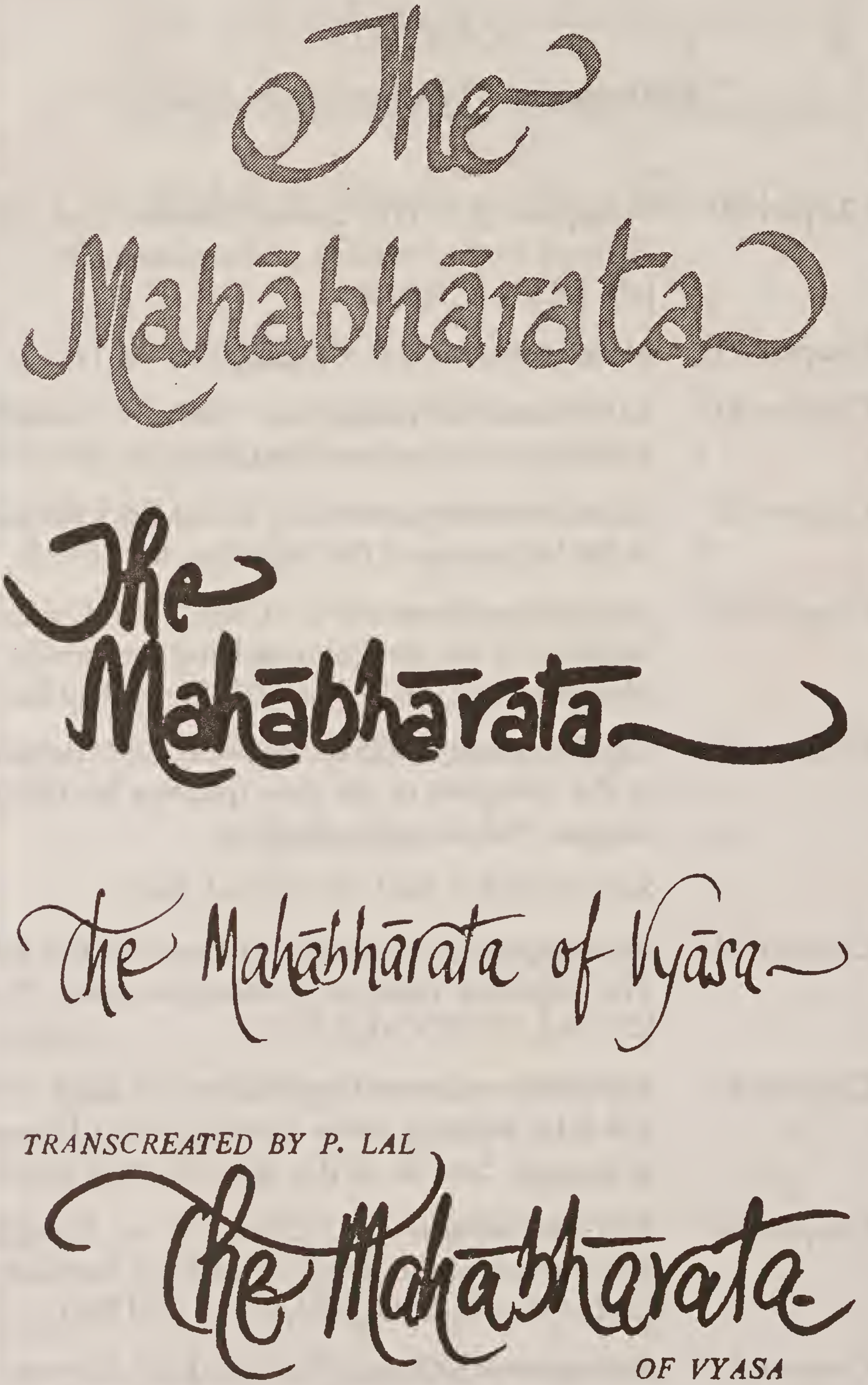
Guttaral	क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	ह	:
	k	kh	g	gh	ṅ	h	ḥ
Palatal	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ	य	श
	c	ch	j	jh	ñ	y	ś
Lingual	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	र	ष
	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ	r	ṣ
Dental	त	थ	द	ध	न	ल	स
	t	th	d	dh	n	l	s
Labial	प	फ	ब	भ	म	व	
	p	ph	b	bh	m	v	

Anusvara = ṁ

CANTO II

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Chapter 20	*Sabhāparva* [Cr. Ed.]/*Sabhakriyāparva* (Cal. Ed.): Relating to the building of the palace. Sec. 1-11 [Cr. Ed.]; 1-4 (Cal. Ed.)
Chapter 21	*Mantraparva* [only in Cr. Ed.]; Sec. 12-17.
Chapter 21	*Lokapālasabhākhyānaparvan:* (only in Cal.Ed.): Relating to the courts of the Lokāpalas. Sec. 5-12.
Chapter 22	*Rājasūyārambhaparvan* (only in Cal. Ed.): Relating to the beginning of the Rājasūya. Sec. 13-19.
Chapter 22	*Jarāsandhavadhaparva(n)* : (Chap. 23 in Cal.Ed.): Relating to the slaughter of King Jarāsandha of Magadha. Sec. 18-22 [Cr.Ed.]; 20-24 (Cal.Ed.)
Chapter 23	*Digvijayaparva(n)* (Chap. 24 in Cal. Ed.) : Relating to the conquest of the four quarters by Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva.
	Sec. 23-29 [Cr. Ed.]; 25-32 (Cal. Ed.)
Chapter 24	*Rājasūyaparva*(n) (*Rājasūyika*: (Chap. 25 in Cal.Ed.): The Rājasūya yajña of Yudhiṣṭhira. Sec. 30-32 [Cr.Ed.]; 33-35 (Cal. Ed.)
Chapter 25	*Arghābhiharaṇaparva* (*Arghāharaṇa* : (Chapt. 26 in Cal.Ed.): Relating to the handing over of the gift of honour. Sec. 32-36 [Cr. Ed.]; 36-39 (Cal.Ed.)
Chapter 26	*Śiśupālavadhaparva*(n) (Chap. 27 in Cal.Ed.): Description of the slaughter of King Śiśupāla of Cedi. Sec. 37-42 [Cr.Ed.]; 40-45 (Cal.Ed.)
Chapter 27	*Dyūtaparva(n)* (Chap. 28 in Cal. Ed.): Account of the first game of dice. Sec. 43-65 [Cr.Ed.]; 46-73 (Cal.Ed.)
Chapter 28	*Anudyūtaparva(n)* (Chap. 29 in Cal.Ed.): The second game of dice. Sec. 66-72 [Cr.Ed.]; 74-81 (Cal.Ed.)



The evolution of wrap-around title-flaps of P. Lāl's monthly Mahābhārata fascicules of the Sabhā Parva that appeared from WRITERS WORKSHOP in 1969-1970 as hardbound volumes 27-37.



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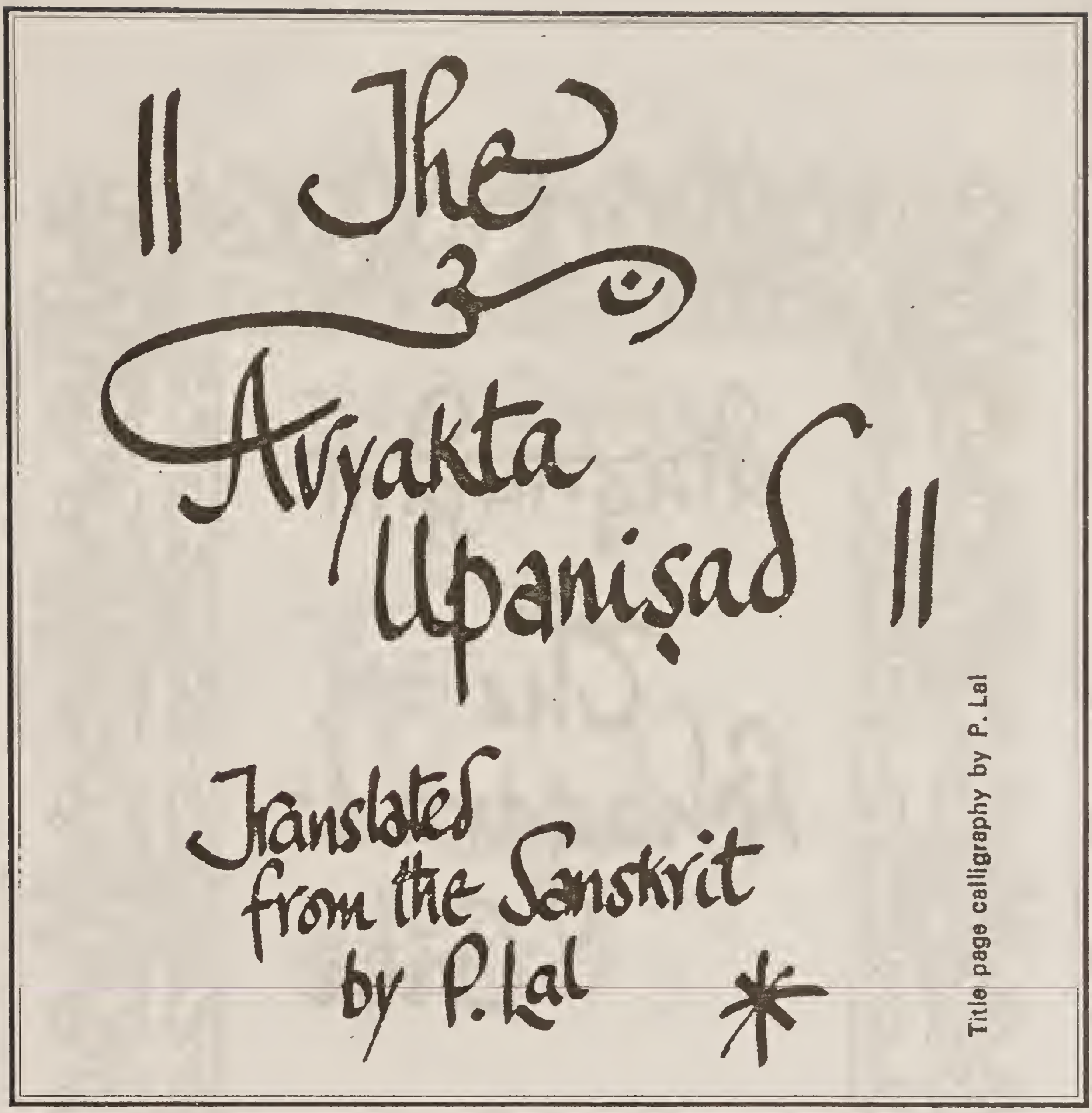
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Title page calligraphy by P. Lal

CORRECTIONS IN THE ĀDI PARVA (BOOK 1)

Page	*Line*	*For*	*Read*
4	24	october	October
4	29	thousandand odd	thousand-odd
6	7	practice	practice.
8	last śloka	n̲amskṛtya	n̲amaskṛtya
18	śloka 91	Āsramavāsika	Āśramavāsika
252	last śloka	Dvaipayana	Dvaipāyana
258	śloka 15	prtoect	protect
284	śloka 112	might	mighty
650	śloka 29	Pāṇḍs	Pāṇḍavas
704	śloka 13	droṇa have	have
718	śloka 18	giver-go	giver – go
921	śloka 32	Vaiśvāmitra	Viśvāmitra
1168	śloka 2	Brahma ponderd	Brahmā pondered
1228	last section	Preface	Prefaces
1228	last section	Svyamvara	Svayamvara

The transcreator will be grateful if other errors in the Ādi (and Sabhā) Parva are brought to his attention. They will be acknowledged in the Vana Parva (Volume 3).

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The WORKSHOP is non-profit and non-political. It involves writers who are sympathetic to the ideals and principles commonly accepted as embodied in creative writing; it is concerned with practice not theorising, helpful criticism not iconoclasm, the torch not the sceptre. Not impressed by desire for quick fame and money by pandering to the increasing sexual over-permissiveness and explicitness in 20th and 21st century "literature", and religious intolerance and hatred masquerading as "freedom in creative writing", WRITERS WORKSHOP upholds the primacy of stable ethical and moral values, and prefers writing that enshrines humanist principles, which are of special relevance in the context of the multi-cultural historical palimpsest of the civilisation known as India.

The WORKSHOP publishes a quarterly book-magazine, *Writers Workshop Literary Miscellany,* devoted to creative writing. It is not a house journal; as a rule it gives preference to experimental work by young and unpublished writers, its two chief criteria for selection being imaginative awareness and mature technique. Established writers appear in its pages if their work meets those standards. *WW Literary Miscellany* does not carry advertising. Sufficient postage (registered mail) should accompany book manuscripts and magazine submissions if their return is desired. Only typed submissions are considered.

One can become a member or an Associate by written application to the Secretary, which requires the support of two members and approval by majority on committee. Members are writers with published work to their credit. To be an Associate requires agreement with aims and objects of WRITERS WORKSHOP, active interest in creative writing, and willingness to lend practical assistance to WORKSHOP activities. An annual subscription (Rs. 200) to *WW Literary Miscellany* confers Associate membership. Further details are available from the Director, P.Lal, at the WORKSHOP address: 162/92 Lake Gardens, Kolkata 700045, India (Phone: 2417-4325, 2417-2683 and 3095-9727 E-mail: profsky@cal.vsnl.net.in) Browse in the WW Book Nook Website: www.writersworkshopkolkata.com

Writers Workshop ~ A Credo by P. Lal

Glory be to Mahakala. It is now 2005. I am three score and sixteen. Time for some home truths. Because WRITERS WORKSHOP has close to 3000 separate titles in its checklist (published over 47 years 1958-2005), and because it has averaged around 100 titles each year since 1995, there is a misconception that it is an Indian publishing leviathan. (No other publisher in India has that many titles on its annual list.) The truth is much less awesome. WRITERS WORKSHOP has no office; it operates from my residence, from the living-room and a multi-purpose bedroom. It has no secretary; my "secretary" is a three-tiered Godrej filing cabinet. It has no editor, no "readers" to inspect, evaluate and OK typescripts; I do all three tasks. It has no proofreader; I perform the nitty-gritty of deleting, accreting and correcting. It has no "assistant" to acknowledge or follow up letters; I do all that too. It has no typewriter; I reply in longhand. (From 2004, kowtowing to the hi-tech convenience, I sometimes seek help from my computer-savvy grand-daughter Shuktara to e-mail replies to insistent and urgent enquiries for WW information.) It has no retail or wholesale distribution "outlet"; there is only a cubby-hole of a kiosk at my residence (8 feet x 4 feet roughly) called the Book Nook, where a dedicated young assistant attends to intermittent sales of WW books. This Lake Gardens kiosk opened in 1998, 40 years after WW's inception.

How then has WW survived? Without plush foundations to back it, without advertisement, without large-hearted patrons? Initially, by the skin of our teeth (1958-1964). Then (1965-1990) by my visits to hard currency lands, specially Great Britain, the USA and Australia on lecture assignments and visiting professorships on two dozen or so occasions, and pumping the shekels thus earned to keep alive a gasping ideal.

Alternative publishing is desperately needed wherever commercial publication rules. WW is *not* a professional publishing house. It does not print well-known names; it makes names known and well known, and then leaves them in the loving clutches of the so-called "free" market (which can be and is very cut-throat and very expensive). It is not sad, it is obnoxious, to plead, as publishers do, "I will not publish poetry because it does not sell." Most English book publishing today in boom-time India and outside is book-dumping. There is a nexus between high-profile PR-conscious book publishers, semi-literate booksellers, moribund public and state libraries, poorly informed and nepotistic underlings in charge of book review pages and supplements of most national newspapers and magazines, and biased bulk purchases of near worthless books by bureaucratic institutions set up–believe it or not!–to inform, educate and elevate the reading public.

Because WW goes in for serious creative writing, and because there is no satisfactory distribution network for such writing, its terms of publication are unique. I must be the only publisher in the world who knows when and where every book is sold; I have the name and address of every buyer of a WW book. Upon my acceptance of a typescript, an agreement form is sent to the writer. *All* copyright remains with the writer. Poetry appears in 350 copies; prose in 500. Ten per cent (35 copies of the poetry book, 50 of the prose) is given in lieu of royalty. The writer is also expected to make an advance purchase of 100 copies of his or her book, for sale or distribution as he or she pleases. Printing is done in Calcutta hand-operated presses, situated in the residences of their owners. The whole process is a cottage industry style low-key entrepreneurship, in the belief that small is not only beautiful but viable as well. Vanity and sponsored publishing? Yes, I am humanly vain about it and I do sponsor what I think is good writing. If any lover of literature will offer to subsidise, with no strings attached, striking new work by talented Indian poets, fiction-writers and belles-lettrists, please get in touch with me. The gesture will be acknowledged, appreciated, accepted, and implemented. Such Good Samaritan generosities, not market forces, are at the root of civilised and significant publishing the world over.

For more information, browse in the WW Book Nook Website: www.writersworkshopkolkata.com

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